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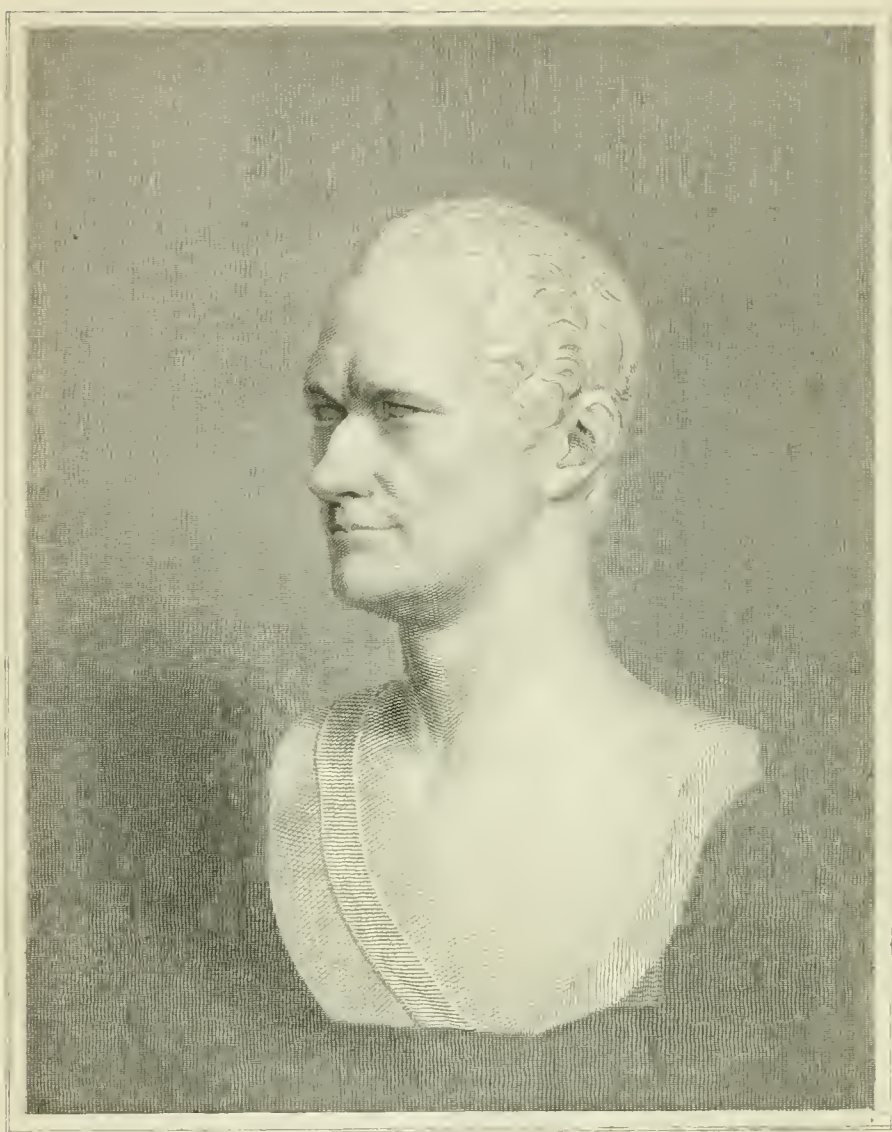


George Bancroft



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1796

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THE
L I F E
OF
ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

BY HIS SON
JOHN C. HAMILTON.

.....genus unde Latinum,
Albanique patres, atque altæ mœnia Romæ.

VOL. I.

New-York:
HALSTED & VOORHIES.

1834.

J. C. P.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1834, by JOHN C. HAMILTON, in the
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JOHN C. HAMILTON
CLERK
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OF NEW-YORK



PREFACE.

It is generally known, that the charge of preparing a BIOGRAPHY OF ALEXANDER HAMILTON has been committed to different gentlemen of distinguished abilities, by whom, from various and sufficient causes, it was not performed.

After the lapse of many years, I was requested to undertake this work ; but a deep conviction of my incapacity, the want of the necessary preparatory studies, and a distrust of the natural bias of my feelings, prompted me to decline it.

An earnest appeal was then made by me to an individual, whose eminent qualifications indicated him as the most appropriate Biographer of his friend, but without success. Thus often disappointed in an object of very dear interest, the request was renewed from a quarter which I felt I had not the right to refuse ; and I yielded a reluctant, though, I fear, it will be deemed a too ready assent.

After these pages had been laid aside for future

revision, and while engaged in researches relating to this subject, it was ascertained that a hurried narrative was in progress.

An anxiety to prevent the promulgation of new errors, and the earnest wishes of my friends, induced me to waive the benefits of a more deliberate examination; and I consented to commit this production to the press, imperfect as it is.

J. C. H.

New-York, February 1, 1834.

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ERRATA.

Page 56, line 18 — for "Chatham" — "the King." Page 284, line 9 — for "suggcsts" — "and indicates."

THE LIFE OF
ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

CHAPTER I.

(ALEXANDER HAMILTON was born in the island of Nevis, on the eleventh of January, seventeen hundred and fifty-seven.) On his father's side his origin was Scottish, and his lineage may be traced in "the Memoirs of the House of Hamilton,"* through the Cambuskeith branch of that House to a remote and renowned ancestry. See p. 2

His grandfather, "Alexander Hamilton of Grange," (the family seat situate in Ayrshire,) about the year seventeen hundred and thirty, married Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Sir Robert Pollock, and had a numerous issue, of whom, James, his fourth son, was the father of the subject of this memoir.

Being bred a merchant, and the West Indies opening an extensive field to commercial enterprise, he left Scotland for St. Christopher's, where, though at first successful, C

* "Historical and Genealogical Memoirs of the House of Hamilton, with Genealogical Memoirs of the several branches of the family." By John Anderson, Licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh. 1825.

through a too generous and easy temper he failed in business, and was, during the greater part of his life, in reduced circumstances.

In the early period of his reverses, he was supported by his friends in Scotland, and in his advanced age, by his son Alexander. He died in St. Vincents in the year seventeen hundred and ninety-nine, having declined, by the advice of his physicians, the earnest solicitations of his son to join him in the United States.

On his mother's side Hamilton's descent was French. His maternal grandfather was a Hugonot, a race to which America owes many of her most illustrious sons, who in this remote region, and after a lapse of two centuries, proved, during the war of independence, how proudly they had cherished the virtuous and determined spirit of their progenitors.

His name was Faucette. In the general expatriation of his protestant countrymen, which followed the revocation of the edict of Nantes, he emigrated to the West Indies, and settled in Nevis, where he successfully pursued the practice of medicine.

He was a man of letters and of polished manners ; whether his original profession was that of a physician, or it was assumed after his emigration, is not ascertained.

Hamilton was the offspring of a second marriage. His mother's first husband was a Dane, named Lavine, who, attracted by her beauty, and recommended to her mother by his wealth, received her hand against her inclination.

The marriage proving unhappy, she applied for and obtained a divorce, and removing to St. Christopher's, there married the father of the subject of these notices, and had by him several sons, of whom Alexander was the youngest.

His mother died when he was a child ; but the traces of her character remained vividly impressed upon his memory. He recollected her with inexpressible fondness, and often

spoke of her as a woman of superior intellect, highly cultivated, of elevated and generous sentiments, and of unusual elegance of person and manner.

On her decease, the indigence of her husband threw their only surviving child upon the bounty of his mother's relatives, Mr. Peter Lytton and his sister, (afterwards Mrs. Mitchell,) who resided at Santa Cruz, where he received the rudiments of his education, commencing at a very tender age.

As an instance of which, rarely as he dwelt upon his personal history, he mentioned his having been taught to repeat the Decalogue in Hebrew, at the school of a Jewess, when so small that he was placed standing by her side on a table.

Many endearing traits of that generous and independent temper which were so conspicuous in his after life, appeared during his childhood. Hence, though his superiority occasionally awakened the envy of his comrades, it was soon disarmed by the amenity of his manners.

There is reason to believe, from the low standard of education in the West Indies, that the circle of his early studies was very limited, probably embracing little more than the rudiments of the English and French languages, the latter of which he subsequently wrote and spoke with the ease of a native.

It is not, however, to be inferred, that his boyhood was spent in indolence ;—with a strong propensity to literature, he early became a lover of books, and the time which other youth employ in classical learning, was by him devoted to miscellaneous reading, happily directed by the advice of Doctor Knox, a respectable presbyterian divine, who, delighted with the unfolding of his mind, took a deep interest in his welfare.

The fervent piety of this gentleman, whose society he frequently enjoyed, gave a strong religious bias to his feel-

ings ; and the topics of their conversation, opened to him an early glimpse of those polemical controversies which have called forth the highest efforts of intellect.

In the autumn of seventeen hundred and sixty-nine, he was placed in the counting house of Mr. Nicholas Cruger, an opulent merchant, and most worthy man, then residing at Santa Cruz. Foreign as such an avocation was to his inclinations, he nevertheless gave to it all his habitual assiduity, and soon mastered its details ; but the inward promptings of his mind looked far beyond it. He thought of immortality, and fondly contemplated from his island home, those fields of glory and summits of honour which displayed themselves to his imagination from beyond the deep.

The kindness of an early friend preserved the following letter, written at this time to his school-fellow, Edward Stevens, in which his youthful aspirations are fully developed.

St. Croix, Nov. 11, 1769.

DEAR EDWARD,

This serves to acknowledge the receipt of yours per Capt. Lowndes, which was delivered me yesterday. The truth of Capt. Lightbown and Lowndes' information is now verified by the presence of your father and sister, for whose safe arrival I pray, and that they may convey that satisfaction to your soul, that must naturally flow from the sight of absent friends in health ; and shall for news this way, refer you to them.

As to what you say, respecting your soon having the happiness of seeing us all, I wish for an accomplishment of your hopes, provided they are concomitant with your welfare, otherwise not ; though doubt whether I shall be present or not, for to confess my weakness, Ned, my ambition is prevalent, so that I condemn the grovelling condition of a clerk, or the like, to which my fortune condemns

me, and would willingly risk my life, though not my character, to exalt my station. I am confident, Ned, that my youth excludes me from any hopes of immediate preferment, nor do I desire it ; but I mean to prepare the way for futurity. I'm no philosopher, you see, and may be justly said to build castles in the air ; my folly makes me ashamed, and beg you'll conceal it ; yet, Neddy, we have seen such schemes successful, when the projector is constant. I shall conclude by saying, I wish there was a war.

I am,

Dear Edward,

Yours,

ALEX. HAMILTON.

P. S. I this moment received yours by William Smith, and pleased to see you give such close application to study.
Addressed to "Edward Stevens, in New-York."

Such was Hamilton before he had reached the age of thirteen.

During the period which followed the peace of Paris, an unusual impulse was given to the commerce of the West Indies, and an active traffic being kept up by a free intercourse with the American colonies, the duties of his counting house became very laborious.

His aptitude in conforming himself to his situation was such, and his advancement so rapid in the confidence of his respected principal, that before he reached his fourteenth year he was left by Mr. Cruger, who made a visit* to the American continent, at the head of his extensive establishment.

Such of his letters as are preserved in the books of his employer, written to various persons in the islands, in Europe and in America, display a capacity for business, which shows that this unusual trust was not misplaced.

*1770.

This occupation was the source of great and lasting benefit to him ; he felt himself amply rewarded for his labours, by the method and facility which it imparted to him ; and amid his various engagements in after years, adverted to it as the most useful part of his education.

The little leisure which he could command from his mercantile duties was devoted to study : his knowledge of mathematics was enlarged ; he became fond of chemistry ; and although his proficiency in it was small, he often urged it as a pursuit well adapted to excite curiosity and create new combinations of thought.

Among the books to which he had access, he preferred those which treat of some branch of ethics. His favourite authors were Pope and Plutarch ; on the latter of which there remain several curious observations from his youthful pen ; but even these were often laid aside for the more profound researches of severer writers.

He often also, at this time, exercised himself in composition on moral topics, to which he afterwards occasionally resorted as a relaxation from the arduous labours of his professional life ; and thus, by his varied studies, his mind became rich in materials awaiting his call.

His aversion to mercantile pursuits, and his aspiring temper, leave little reason to suppose that he could have conformed his life to the sphere in which it commenced.

While “arms” seemed to have been his predominant passion, the world was at peace. Fortune appeared to have cut him off from every avenue to political distinction, and thus without a theatre of action, or prospect of preferment, it would be difficult to pronounce what, at this time, was his probable destiny ; but an event which would seem to be the last that could bode good to any being, lifted the veil.

In August, seventeen hundred and seventy-two, soon after he had returned from a commercial expedition to St. Eu-

statia, the Leeward Islands were desolated by one of those terrific hurricanes which so often visit the tropics. Before the terrors of the scene had worn off, and while its effects were still visible, a description of it appeared, which though published in the neighbouring island of St. Christopher's, attracted universal attention at St. Croix; and such was the impression it produced, that the governor and some of the principal persons of the island made an especial effort to discover its author, and ultimately traced it to Hamilton. This simple incident decided his fate. His wishes were consulted, and it was determined to send him to New-York to complete his education.

A short time after he left the West Indies in a vessel bound for Boston, where he arrived in the month of October, 1772, having escaped during his passage an imminent peril; for, as he approached the American continent, the vessel was discovered to be on fire, which was with difficulty extinguished.

He proceeded thence to New-York, where, through the kindness of his friend Dr. Knox, he was introduced to Doctors Rogers, Mason, and other gentlemen of distinction.

His relations had provided him with ample funds, and had made arrangements for future remittances. It only remained for him to choose the place of his instruction. By the advice of these friends, he joined a celebrated grammar school at Elizabethtown, which was conducted under the patronage of Governor Livingston and Mr. Boudinot, in whose families he became intimate.

The principal of this school was Francis Barber; a man of strong sense, considerable attainments, and respectable connexions. Fired by the prospect of distinction, and by his love of country, he broke up his school at the commencement of the revolution,—entered the army, soon rose to the rank of colonel, and in the course of the contest was

often and much distinguished. Among his school-fellows were Jonathan Dayton, afterwards Speaker of the House of Representatives, Brockholst Livingston, and other individuals, who subsequently acquired celebrity.

His industry at this school kept pace with his enlarged prospects. During the winter, while at the house of Governor Livingston, he was accustomed to labour until midnight. In summer, it was his habit to retire at dawn to the quiet of a neighbouring cemetery, where he was often seen preparing his lessons for the day. By these exertions, he made rapid progress.

During this time, his habits of composition were continued: his essays occasionally touched upon political topics. He wrote an elegy on the death of a young lady in whose family he was intimate, which is remembered as possessing much merit. He also composed a prologue and epilogue for a play, which was performed by the officers of a company of British soldiers stationed in the vicinity of Elizabethtown.

His friend, Mr. Boudinot, having lost an infant, he sat up to watch the corpse the night prior to its interment. During the performance of this gloomy office of friendship, he wrote some consolatory verses, which were presented to its mother as a tribute of regard, and were long preserved with great interest.

Before the end of the year, he was deemed by his instructor qualified to enter college; and after returning to New-York, proceeded with Mr. Hercules Mulligan,* in whose

* Mr. H. Mulligan was a brother of Mr. M., of the firm of Kortwright & Co., to whom West India produce was consigned, to be sold and appropriated to the support of Hamilton. He outlived most of the revolutionary race, and had been very active in its earliest scenes. He was chosen by the citizens of New-York one of the revolutionary committee of one hundred; and after the battle of Long Island, left the city, was captured on his journey, and detained there during the war. After Hamilton entered the family of Washington, Mulligan became the confidential correspondent of the commander-in-chief,

house he subsequently lodged, and from whom many of the incidents of his youthful life are derived, on a visit to Doctor Witherspoon, then president of the college at Princeton.

On his introduction to this distinguished individual, he underwent a private examination. He then stated his desire to be admitted to either class which his attainments would justify ; but upon the condition that he might be permitted to advance from class to class, with as much rapidity as his exertions would enable him to do. The president, after listening to this novel proposition, replied that it was a subject resting in the discretion of the trustees, and promised him an early decision. On his return to New-York, an answer was received from the president, that the established usages of the institution forbade a compliance with his wishes, but expressive of regret that he could not be admitted on his own terms, “inasmuch as he was convinced that the young gentleman would do honour to any seminary in which he should be educated.” He then entered Kings, (now Columbia College,) in the city of New-York, and under the auspices of that liberal institution, with the aid of a tutor, proceeded in the plan which he had marked out for himself, having been received as a private student, and not attached to any particular class.

To his collegiate studies, he soon added that of anatomy, attending the lectures of Doctor Clossey ; — a branch of knowledge which he was anxious to acquire, having been led from his early fondness for chemistry, to entertain the idea of selecting the practice of medicine as his permanent pursuit.

Here, together with his earliest companion, Stevens, and his long-cherished and devoted friends, Robert Troup and Nicholas Fish, he joined a debating club, which continued

and furnished the most important intelligence. On the evacuation of that city, Washington complimented him by taking his first breakfast with the patriotic tailor.

in existence until the college was dispersed, where they relate, that "he gave extraordinary displays of richness of genius and energy of mind."

"At this time," says Colonel Troup, in a letter to a friend, "the general was attentive to public worship, and in the habit of praying on his knees night and morning. I lived in the same room with him for some time, and I have often been powerfully affected by the fervor and eloquence of his prayers. He had read many of the polemical writers on religious subjects, and he was a zealous believer in the fundamental doctrines of christianity. I confess, that the arguments with which he was accustomed to justify his belief, have tended in no small degree to confirm my own faith in revealed religion."

This religious temperament is strongly contrasted with the bold and energetic character of his ambition, but they may be traced to a common source. The ardour of his feelings clothed every object of his attention with a powerful interest; and the wise instruction of his youth had taught him that the flame of devotion does not burn less purely for being kindled on the same altar with the fires of a virtuous emulation.

A hymn, written at this time, entitled the "Soul entering into Bliss," has been preserved, possessing not a little poetical merit, and strongly illustrative of the state of his feelings.

This train of sentiment did not cast a melancholy shade over his character. Constitutionally happy, he mingled gaily with his friends; and often, as Mr. Mulligan relates, "used to sit the evening with his family, writing doggrel verses for their amusement, and was always amiable and cheerful." His talent for satire was also frequently exercised. "John Holt," says Troup, "who then published a whig paper in New-York, had, by his zeal in the American cause, drawn upon himself the invectives of all the ministerial writers;

these invectives Hamilton burlesqued in doggrel rhyme, with great wit and humour. He also presented me with a manuscript of fugitive poetry, which I considered as a strong evidence of the elasticity of his genius, and have often lamented that it was lost with my books and papers during the war."

But the term of his youthful studies was fast approaching its close. The repeated invasions of the rights of the colonists, gave an impulse to the public mind, which could not be restrained; and the unbounded prosperity which they had so long enjoyed was soon to be succeeded by the desolating scenes of civil war.

A brief sketch of the events which led to this result, as connected immediately with the province of New-York, the youthful theatre of Hamilton's life, must, for a short space, interrupt the progress of this narrative.



CHAPTER II.

AMONG the conflicting claims for precedence, in resisting the aggressions of the mother country, the early stand taken by New-York, has been in a great measure overlooked.

Peculiar causes concurred to give an unusual share of influence to the ministerial party in that colony, and to render the adoption of a course of resistance the subject of much cautious consideration: among these, its exposed geographical position, diversity of population, discordance of religious creeds, unequal distribution of property, the peculiar tenure of the landed interest, and the limited provision for education, are most prominent. With these also were united the influence of a large expenditure and extensive patronage, and the fearful apprehension which the existence of hordes of savages roaming within its limits, or hovering on its frontiers, necessarily kept alive. Notwithstanding which, the records of this colony show, that from the earliest period of its existence, the colonial rights were maintained, and usurpations resisted with a vigorous and determined spirit.

During its first struggles, most of the dissensions which arose were usually healed by the removal of an obnoxious Governor, and by a temporary compliance with public feeling. But the great question of supplies which began to be discussed in British America at the commencement of the eighteenth century, continued to be a fruitful source of controversy until closed by the Revolution.

As early as seventeen hundred and eight, the Assembly of New-York avowed the principle that, as freemen, their rights of property were unalienable, and not to be controlled

except with their own consent ; and to the assertion of this First Great Principle of Representative Government and of Liberty, on which the whole question of the Revolution turned, they adhered during a period of nearly seventy years. The administration of Sir George Clinton, which preceded the war of seventeen hundred and fifty-six, had been unusually turbulent, and the assembly for a long time gave a surly compliance to his requisitions, and observed a watchful supervision of the civil expenditures. With a temper little disposed to conciliation, and unable to control by patronage the growing dissatisfaction, application was made by him to the British ministry to interpose their authority, which at last departed reluctantly from their systematic policy, and addressed a letter to the assembly of New-York, urging them to abandon their practice of annual appropriations, and to provide a civil list for a term of years. This unexpected interference was met with an angry remonstrance, and was pronounced a gross usurpation of their colonial rights.

The war which ensued with France diverted the attention of the assembly from this subject ; but, within a year after its close we find the same colony adopting a spirited address in opposition to the statutes which had been recently enacted, designated under a common appellation as “ The Acts of Trade,” claiming their repeal on the same principle, “ that the colonists could only be taxed with their own consent.”

This elevated tone did not proceed from these acts alone, the conferring upon their judges equity powers was another source of complaint ; but the great cause of umbrage was an act of parliament restricting the emission of colonial bills of credit.

This expedient had been resorted to in the year seventeen hundred and nine. The redemption of the issues was secured by duties, and by an excise on the imports, and a

measure embraced at first from necessity, had from the same cause grown into a usage. The colony had emerged from the late war with a heavy debt, and this ill-timed restriction, connected with the commercial check produced by the acts of trade, threatened an almost universal bankruptcy.

While a system of unlimited issues upon government credit was justly condemned, those who looked beyond the immediate effect of this parliamentary interference regarded it as part of a systematic plan to wrest from New-York the control of her resources, and to appropriate them to the purposes of a national revenue.

The stamp act, which soon followed, dispelled all doubts upon this subject; and, though the governor of New-York sought by repeated prorogations to prevent opposition, yet at their first meeting, (although the stamp act had been repealed,) the assembly renewed the declaration of their right "only to be taxed with their own consent."

The repeal of these obnoxious laws seemed to have produced at this time a general conciliation; and the various legislatures were seen pouring forth grateful addresses for the clemency of their prince, and vying with each other in assurances of their loyalty. But among the mass of the people a new spirit had gone abroad: exultation at their successful resistance; pride in the self-denial which had sustained them; confidence in their righteous cause, and in their strength for future emergencies, were mingled with that ambition which saw in the defence of colonial rights a loftier object of distinction than the highest favours which the government could confer.

The colony of New-York was not long permitted to enjoy this calm;—the same year* that gave birth to the stamp act, produced the statute for quartering troops in America, subsequently called the billeting or mutiny acts,

* December, 1765.

and the first demand under them of provision for the troops was made upon the assembly of New-York.

That body firmly resisted the demand, justly viewing it as an attempt to establish a standing army in America, to enforce the illegal exactions of parliament.

In seventeen hundred and sixty-six, the demand was renewed ; and the assembly, weary of the contest, then gave the first evidence of vacillation, by passing a law making a grant for a single year, but, at the same time, refusing a formal compliance with the bill, for which cause it was rejected by the crown.

A similar result occurred in the ensuing year, but before the intelligence of it reached England, the suspending act had been passed, by which all right of legislation was withheld, until the mutiny bill was literally carried into effect ; a measure concurred in by the friends of the colony in parliament, as among the most lenient which could be resorted to.

Overawed by this bold usurpation, the assembly, at its ensuing session, made the grant, but studiously avoided to sanction the mutiny acts, and the ministry, not caring to press the question of their supremacy, approved it.

The government now proceeded to consummate their design, and the final measures were taken of imposing a duty on tea, and other articles, made payable at the colonial custom houses.

The proceeds of these duties were, at the same time, appropriated to the support of the colonial civil list, and the officers of the crown, appointed at its pleasure, were rendered wholly independent of the people upon whose rights they were to decide.

To ensure the success of the system, a new class of officers was created, subject to a board of trade, established at Boston, with full powers of search and seizure, and declared to be wholly irresponsible to the laws of the colonies.

This monstrous usurpation admitted of no compromise.

The provincial assemblies pronounced it arbitrary and unconstitutional. The rights of the colonies became the theme of general discussion. Public opinion soon ripened to the conviction, that the distinction between internal and external taxes was wholly chimerical. The parliamentary supremacy was denied, and a concerted opposition was formed throughout the American continent.

The circular letter of Massachusetts, in February,* and the determined resolves of Virginia in May, were re-echoed by the assembly of New-York, into whose councils the intrepid spirit of Philip Schuyler and George Clinton had infused new vigour, and resolutions were adopted, denying the whole assumed power of the parliament. As in Virginia and Massachusetts, so in New-York, these proceedings were punished by a dissolution of the assemblies.

The elections which ensued, aroused all the latent feelings of the American people, and every artificial excitement was called in aid to secure an undivided opposition in the popular bodies.

A "Journal of Occurrences" was regularly published at Boston, and industriously circulated, full of details of the insults of the soldiery, and of the arbitrary severity of the new commissioners of the revenue. Effigies of the ministry were carried in procession, and the anniversary of the repeal of the stamp act was celebrated in all parts of the country, with deep interest and studious pomp.

During these stirring events, the government party in New-York had not been inactive, and though the assembly still concurred in opposition to the laws which most inflamed the people, a majority was found sufficiently servile to re-enact the mutiny bill, and to defeat a proposition authorizing the vote by ballot, — a measure to which the patriots had looked with the utmost anxiety. An incident occurred at this time, which gave a new character to the opening

* 1768.

drama; and to the firmness of one individual, may, in a great measure, be attributed the rapid growth of that popular excitement, which ultimately overcame the influence of the ministerial party.

While the grant to the troops was under discussion before the assembly, an address, under the title of a "Son of Liberty to the betrayed Inhabitants of the Colony of New-York," issued from the press,* in which the conduct of that body as contrasted with that of their predecessors, and of South Carolina and Massachusetts, was severely censured, and the subserviency of the majority held up to merited indignation.

This bold rebuke was laid before the house by its speaker,† and a resolution was adopted, declaring it to be "an infamous and seditious libel." On a division of a full house upon this question, Philip Schuyler stood alone in the negative. A proclamation followed for the discovery of the author, and Captain Alexander McDougal, to whom it was traced, was seized by order of the governor, and committed to prison. When arrested, he declared, "I rejoice that I am the first sufferer for liberty since the commencement of our glorious struggles." The effect of this proceeding was electric. Public meetings were called to vindicate his opinions, and from being a martyr he became the idol of the patriots.‡

In this excited state of feeling, trifling occurrences became of moment. The liberty pole erected by the people in commemoration of the repeal of the stamp act, was cut down by the garrison, — a second was erected, and again

* December 16, 1769.

† December 19, 1769.

‡ The Chief Justice, before whom he was taken on a bench warrant, said to him, "Well, you have brought yourself into a pretty scrape." "That," he replied, "must be judged of by my peers." "There is full proof you are the author of an infamous and seditious libel." "This must also be tried by my peers."

cut down : — a general meeting of the citizens was then convened, and after denouncing the soldiers as enemies to the people, a new liberty staff, clamped with iron, was elevated amid the shouts of the populace, which defied further violence, and long stood an emblem of their opposition.

The excitement which had been thus aroused, did not soon subside. A strife arose between the civil and military authorities ; — daily rencontres with the soldiers ensued ; — acts of violence soon followed ; — a serious riot occurred ; and a breach was now opened not to be healed. In the midst of these scenes, intelligence was received of the massacre at Boston of the fifth of March, — an event which, more than any other, accelerated the revolution.

During this period, McDougal, undismayed by his situation, poured forth from his prison continual appeals to the people, teeming with scornful reproaches of his oppressors, and the boldest avowals of revolutionary sentiments. The cause of McDougal soon became the cause of every liberal mind. To soften the rigours of his confinement, to evince by every attention a detestation of its authors, and, in his person, to plead the cause of liberty, became an act of conspicuous patriotism. Ladies of the first distinction thronged to his prison. The character of every individual engaged in the controversy, became the subject of comment, and the applause which attended the name of Schuyler, gave a new value to the popularity which his firmness in the legislature had acquired.

McDougal was a man born among the people, and at a time when aristocratic feelings were prevalent, the importance attached to an individual of obscure birth, elevated the commonalty above all artificial distinctions, and commended to the aspiring spirits of the day, the lesson of resistance.

The servile agents of government added new causes of dissatisfaction. After an imprisonment of three months, a

grand jury was packed, composed of the dependants of the governor. The government press was full of addresses, urging his conviction. The speaker, and other official persons, took their seats with the court, and, yielding to this corrupt influence, an indictment was found against him. At the ensuing session of the assembly,* he was brought before the bar of the house, and although he had already incurred the penalty of the law, on a refusal to ask pardon, he was again imprisoned:—a leading member proposing that the infliction of *peine forte et dure* should be imposed to extort a humiliating recantation from his lips. But his spirit was too firm to be intimidated, and to this brutal threat, he replied, “That rather than resign the rights and privileges of a British subject, he would suffer his right hand to be cut off at the bar of the house.”

Baffled in their attempt to levy a duty on tea, through the ordinary channels of commerce, the ministry next resorted to the expedient of introducing it through the agency of the East India Company. On information of this project,† the press teemed with addresses, exhorting to resistance. An association was formed, which denounced all aiders and abettors in the introduction of this article, as enemies to the liberties of America; and public opinion, more powerful than the laws, lent its aid to enforce decrees which required no other sanction.

On the arrival of the first cargo, the governor proposed as a compromise, that it should be landed at the fort; but the citizens resolutely refused, and, influenced by the patriotic example of Boston, threw it into the bay. The remaining cargo was then removed from the harbour, and the day of its departure was celebrated with tumultuous rejoicings.‡

* December 13, 1770.

† November 10, 1773.

‡ April 18, 1774, the *Nancy*, tea ship, Captain Lockyer, arrived. Application was made to the city committee to land. A sloop with a body of men was

The infatuated ministry now determined to resort to compulsion ; and the first fruit of their policy was, a bill to close the port of Boston, — a measure bearing on its features every mark of tyranny.

The whole continent saw in this step the fate to which they were doomed ; and the proposition to hold a general congress became the favourite topic of discussion, and seemed to open the only prospect of relief.

The election of the New-York delegates to this congress was not free from difficulty. The committee of the assembly appointed to sit in its recess, and which was raised expressly to paralyze the opposition, claimed the right of nomination, and their claim was enforced by many of the merchants, and by all the dependants of the crown.

The only course which remained was, to wrest the choice from this body, and submit it to the people at large. Parties immediately formed on this ground, and for some time it was doubtful which had the preponderance. After various preparatory measures, a general assemblage of the citizens was determined upon, and on the sixth of July seventeen hundred and seventy-four, a large concourse met, long remembered as “the great meeting in the fields.”

The measures of this meeting were of the deepest moment. The more cautious policy of the committee of correspondence had not kept pace with the feelings of the people at large, nor with those of their more ardent leaders ; and it was determined by a decisive act to take a position from which the colony could not recede.

To add to the solemnity of the occasion, the persecuted McDougal was invited to preside, and resolutions framed

despatched to watch the vessel at Sandy Hook. April 22, Captain Chambers arrived with a small adventure of tea ; a number of people at 8 P. M. took out the tea, and started it into the sea, persons of reputation superintending it. — At 10 the people dispersed quietly, and on the succeeding day the bells rang, and a large meeting was held at the liberty pole.

by him were adopted, inveighing against the Boston Port Act; exhorting the contemplated congress to prohibit all commercial intercourse with Great Britain; pledging the colony to be governed by its resolutions, and recommending the important and definitive measure of an election by the several counties of deputies to a colonial convention, for the express purpose of choosing delegates to the general congress; with a request that if any of the counties considered this mode impracticable or inexpedient, that they should give their approbation to the deputies chosen in the city of New-York — a suggestion which was adopted.

It was on this interesting occasion that Hamilton, then seventeen years of age, first took part in the public deliberations.

It has been related to have been his habit to walk several hours each day under the shade of some large trees which stood in Batteau, now Dey-street, talking to himself in an under tone of voice, apparently engaged in deep thought, a practice which he continued through life.

This circumstance attracted the attention of his neighbours, to whom he was known as the “young West Indian,” and led them to engage in conversation with him. One of them remarking the vigour and maturity of his thoughts, urged him to address this meeting, to which all the patriots were looking with the greatest interest.

From this seeming intrusion, he at first recoiled; but, after listening attentively to the successive speakers, and finding several points untouched, he presented himself to the assembled multitude.

The novelty of the attempt, his youthful countenance, his slender and diminutive form, awakened curiosity and arrested attention. Overawed by the scene before him, he at first hesitated and faltered; but as he proceeded almost unconsciously to utter his accustomed reflections, his mind warmed with the theme, his energies were recovered; and,

after a discussion clear, cogent, and novel, of the great principles involved in the controversy, he depicted in glowing colours the long continued and long endured oppressions of the mother country ; he insisted on the duty of resistance, pointed to the means and certainty of success, and described the waves of rebellion sparkling with fire, and washing back on the shores of England the wrecks of her power, her wealth, and her glory. The breathless silence ceased as he closed ; and the whispered murmur, "it is a collegian ! it is a collegian !" was lost in loud expressions of wonder and applause at the extraordinary eloquence of the young stranger. /

CHAPTER III.

THE enthusiasm which led Hamilton to appear thus early before the public had been kindled by a visit to Boston, a short time after the destruction of the tea.

*Hamilton
visits Boston
early 4*

He found the public mind in that place in the utmost agitation. Excited by the high tone which prevailed there, his attention was directed to the leading topics of this great controversy. He had previously formed and entertained, as he himself relates, "strong prejudices on the ministerial side, until he became convinced by the superior force of the arguments in favour of the colonial claims." On his return to New-York, he enlisted warmly on the side of America, and gave this early and public pledge of his devotion to her cause. A short time only elapsed before he hastened to redeem it.

The elections held for the choice of delegates to the general congress, which met at Philadelphia in September, seventeen hundred and seventy-four, had given such strong indications of the growth of popular sentiments in the colony of New-York, that the government party became exceedingly embarrassed. But unwilling to retire from the contest without a further effort, they resolved to endeavour by a combined series of publications to check the progress of revolutionary opinions.

This office of loyalty was undertaken by the gentlemen composing the episcopal clergy, — a body who, looking to the monarch as the head both of the church and state, regarded with horror every attempt to impair the royal prerogative, — had long been conspicuous as its most zealous supporters, and who being accomplished scholars and

able writers, entered the lists of controversy with unhesitating confidence.

Of these, Dr. Myles Cooper, the president of Kings College, an Englishman by birth, held the first rank. Among the other clerical gentlemen, Doctor Inglis, the father of the present Bishop of Nova Scotia; Seabury, subsequently Bishop of Connecticut; Doctor Samuel Chandler, and Mr. Isaac Wilkins of Westchester, afterwards the Reverend Doctor Wilkins, were the most prominent.

Of the champions for the colonies, Governor Livingston of New-Jersey, a gentleman who to the purest and most intrepid patriotism united great sagacity, refined manners, and a highly cultivated taste, and his son-in-law, Mr. Jay, were the most conspicuous. To these was now to be added the name of Hamilton. On his return from Boston he had published a Defence of the Destruction of the Tea, and had kept up in the columns of Holt's paper* a spirited attack upon the measures of the ministry, in which he was found breaking a lance with his master, Doctor Cooper. A more important controversy now awaited him.

Within a short time after the adjournment of the first congress, among several publications, two tracts appeared more distinguished than the rest, which were the joint productions of Doctor Seabury and Mr. Wilkins, the latter of whom had recently occupied a prominent place in the deliberations of the New-York assembly. The first bore the title of "Free Thoughts on the Proceedings of the Continental Congress," the other was entitled "Congress Canvassed, by a Westchester Farmer."†

These publications were chiefly directed against the

* In a letter of Mr. Jay to McDougal, of the 5th of December, 1775, he thus writes: "I hope Mr. Hamilton continues busy: I have not received Holt's paper these three months, and therefore cannot judge of the progress he makes."

† November 24, 1774.

*Seabury attrib-
uted the Essay
to Wilkins;
Seabury li-
Seabury
alone.*

“non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation agreements,” which had been recommended by the congress.

In the first, the writer with much art, endeavours to impress the minds of the colonists with the dangers of restrictive measures ; to excite the jealousy of the farmers against the merchants, alleging that the whole object was to engross a monopoly of goods ; — anticipates, as the probable consequence, the closing of the port, and the suspension of justice, and remarks, with great ingenuity, on the inconsistency of a congress, which, pretending to protect the liberties of the people, had sanctioned the invasion of every private right, and recommended inquisitorial powers to the committees, to enforce their worse than fruitless agreements ; artfully directing the attention of the people to the assembly of the province, as the only legitimate and adequate medium of redress.

In the second address, the illegality of the recent elections is strongly urged ; the appropriation of the proceeds of goods sold for the infraction of the restrictive associations to the use of the people of Boston, is condemned as a violation of all the rights of property ; the danger of territorial encroachments is strongly depicted ; and displaying in full array the omnipotence of England, the chimera of a commonwealth of congresses being able to cope with the vigour of the monarchy, is powerfully ridiculed.

The wide, industrious, and gratuitous circulation of these pamphlets, inducing the belief that they had the sanction of the government, they soon became the text book of the tories, and were applauded by them as containing irrefutable arguments against the measures of the “sons of liberty.”

The zeal with which they were extolled by the friends of government, invited the loudest condemnations of the popular party.

They were believed to have been the productions of a

clergyman of the church of England, who had been conspicuous in the support of the ministry. This circumstance was connected in the public mind with the recollection of the course adopted by the spiritual lords in parliament, and new feelings of quickened asperity were aroused. The efforts to introduce an episcopacy into America were recurred to, and the abject devotion displayed by some of the clerical dependants of the crown, and their unguarded avowal of their sentiments, increased the odium.

In the journal of the whigs, (as they were then called,) the zealots of the day proposed that the author and publisher should be indicted for treasonable designs; and in a neighbouring colony the exasperation rose so high, that, at a meeting of the county, the pamphlets were tarred and feathered, and nailed to the pillory, amid the shouts of the people. Within a fortnight after the second tract had issued from the press,* a pamphlet appeared under the title of "A Full Vindication of the Measures of Congress from the Calumnies of their Enemies, in answer to a Letter under the signature of A. W. Farmer; whereby his *sophistry* is exposed, his *cavils* confuted, his *artifices* detected, and his *wit* ridiculed, in a General Address to the Inhabitants of America, and a Particular Address to the Farmers of the *Province of New-York*. Veritas magna est et prævalebit. Truth is powerful, and will prevail. New-York. Printed by James Rivington. 1774."

After a just tribute to that distinguished body, of which he says, "distinguished, whether we consider the characters of the men who composed it, the number and dignity of their constituents, or the important ends for which they were appointed," the writer, in the outset, meets the question of the supremacy of parliament, and pointing out the distinction between freedom and slavery, contends that

* December 15, 1774.

representation is essential to the validity of every tax ; justifies the measures of congress, as proceeding from necessity, and shows the utter inefficacy of petitions and remonstrances, as evinced by their repeated failure. "When the political salvation," he says, "of any community is depending, it is incumbent upon those who are set up as its guardians, to embrace such measures as have justice, vigour, and a probability of success to recommend them. If, instead of this, they take those measures which are themselves feeble and little likely to succeed, and may, through a defect of vigour, involve the community in still greater danger, they may justly be considered its betrayers. It is not enough, in times of imminent peril, to use only *possible* means of preservation. Justice and sound policy, dictate the use of *probable* means." "We can have no resource but in a restriction of our trade, or a resistance vi et armis."

He next proceeds to vindicate the policy of congress, and to defend the principle of the restrictive measures, then much contested.

In reply to the argument as to the impoverishing effects of these measures, he urges, as a necessary consequence, the encouragement of manufactures, and the benefits of emigration, which would be induced by the loss of the American market, and the "rapid growth of domestic resources, which would place the country beyond the caprices of foreign powers." "If, by the necessity of the thing," he says, "manufactures should once be established and take root among us, they will pave the way, still more, to the future grandeur and glory of America, and by lessening its need of external commerce, will render it still securer against the encroachments of tyranny."

Deriving arguments from his knowledge of the West Indies, he illustrates, in a close detail of consequences, the efficacy of those measures, in inducing their concurrence,

and by affecting their interests and those of the other parts of the empire, "would rouse them from their neutrality, and engage them in a common opposition to the lawless hand of tyranny, which is extended to ravage our liberty from us, and might soon be extended for the same purpose to them." In answer to the alarm which had been sounded as to the blockade of the port, he shows the impracticability of a permanent embargo, which, if persisted in, would produce a permanent severance of the empire.

Having controverted the general arguments of his opponents, the writer proceeds to address the farmers as a class, and says, "I do not address you in particular, because I have any greater connexion with you than with other people. *I despise all false pretensions and mean arts.* Let those have recourse to dissimulation, who cannot defend their cause without it. 'Tis my maxim to let the plain naked truth speak for itself." — "'Tis the farmer who is most oppressed in all countries where slavery exists." After a rapid sketch of the grievous burthens of England, he inquires why, if the principle is once admitted, such consequences should not follow, and asks what limit there is to taxation?

He then displays, in glowing colours, the injustice of the Boston port bill, and directs the confidence of the colonists to the wisdom of congress to redress their grievances; and after lauding the discretion of that body, which, while it restricts the commerce of the country, continues to petition, he closes his summary of their injuries, with the exclamation, — the farmer cries "tell me not of delegates, congresses, committees, mobs, riots, insurrections, and associations, — a plague on them all! Give me the steady, uniform, unbiassed influence of the courts of justice. I have been happy under their protection, — I shall be so again."

"I say, tell me not of the British commons, lords, ministry, ministerial tools, placemen, pensioners, parasites, — I scorn to let my life and property depend upon the pleasure

of any of them. Give me the steady, uniform, unshaken security of constitutional freedom. Give me the right of trial by a jury of my own neighbours, and to be taxed by my own representatives only. What will become of the law and courts of justice without this? The shadow may remain, but the substance will be gone. I would die to preserve the law upon a solid foundation; but take away liberty, and the foundation is destroyed."

A short time after,* a reply followed, entitled "A View of the Controversy, by a Westchester Farmer," marked with still greater asperity than the former, and pressing its object with new arguments. The inertness of the colony is shown, to prove the narrow circle of factious principles; the right of legislation in the colonies is denied, on inferences drawn from the tenor of the colonial charters; the effect of an embargo, to sever from them their English friends, is alleged; the dangers of a civil war strongly deprecated, and a remedy proposed of vesting in parliament the enactment of general laws, reserving to the legislatures the mere right of taxation.

Within a month,† this paper was followed by a more elaborate answer, of seventy-eight pages, entitled "The Farmer Refuted; or a more Comprehensive and Impartial View of the Disputes between Great Britain and the Colonies, intended as a Further Vindication of the Congress, in answer to a Letter from A W. Farmer, entitled A View of the Controversy between Great Britain and her Colonies, including a Mode of determining the Present Disputes finally and effectually, &c. By a Sincere Friend to America. Tituli Remedia pollicentur, sed Pixedes ipsæ venena continent. The title promises Remedies, but the Box itself poisons. Printed by James Rivington. 1775."

The author of the Congress Canvassed had spoken of

* January 5, 1775.

† February 5, 1775.

the measures of the congress as tending to resolve society into its elementary principles, and reduce it to a state of nature. His "Refuter" compares his idea of a state of nature with that of Hobbes, "that moral obligation is conventional, and virtue purely artificial;" and sarcastically implies in him a similar sentiment, denying the existence and supremacy of a Deity. "For," he says, "to grant that there is a Supreme Intelligence who rules the world, and has established laws to regulate the actions of his creatures, and still to assert that men are in a state of nature, may be considered as perfectly free from all restraints of law and government, appear to a common understanding altogether irreconcilable." He then gives a just and philosophical definition of "natural rights," and deduces from them the rights of the colonies, in contradistinction to the rights of parliament — assuming the position, that the principle of colonial connexion is by grant from the crown, he distinguishes between the allegiance due to a common sovereign, and the authority of the commons, which is commensurate only with the sphere of their election; and admitting the incidental power of parliament over the colonies as derived from *their consent*, he shows that the extent of that consent is the only just measure of their authority, and the true principles of free government implying a share in legislation: — "You are mistaken," he says, "when you confine arbitrary government to a monarchy. It is not the supreme power being placed in one, instead of many, that discriminates an arbitrary from a free government. When any people are ruled by laws in framing which they have no part, that are to bind them to all intents and purposes, without in the same manner binding the legislature themselves, they are in the strictest sense slaves, and the government with respect to them is despotic; and hence the authority of parliament over the colonies would in all pro-

bility be a more intolerable and excessive species of despotism than the most absolute monarchy, as the temptation to abuse would be greater. He contends that the right of colonial legislation is an *inherent right*, “and that the foundation of the English constitution rests upon the principle, that laws have no validity without the consent of the people;” “natural liberty is a gift of the beneficent Creator to the whole human race; civil liberty is *founded* on it; civil liberty is only natural liberty, modified and secured by civil society.” In answer to the inferences, from the charters, he proceeds to take a survey of the political history of the colonies, and proves from the terms of the charters that the idea of parliamentary supremacy is excluded, and an express exemption reserved from duties on exports and imports: and in confirmation of the sense of the crown on this question, he adverts to the historical facts, that when a bill to give to British subjects the privilege of fishing on the American coast was introduced into the house of commons, it was announced from the throne “that America was not annexed to the realm, and that it was not fitting that parliament should make laws for those countries.” And, that in a succeeding reign the royal assent was refused to a similar bill, on the ground “that the colonies were out of the realm and jurisdiction of parliament;” that on the passage of the first act to impose duties, it was opposed in Virginia, and, to satisfy that high spirited colony, a declaration was given under the privy seal, “that taxes ought not to be laid without the consent of the general assembly.” Canvassing carefully each successive charter, he shows, that the common principle extends through them all, and that a different doctrine is contrary “to the sacred rights of mankind, which are not to be rummaged for among old parchments, or musty records: they are written, as with a sunbeam, in the whole *volume* of human nature, by the hand of the

Divinity itself, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power."

Having closed the argument against the authority of parliament, as founded either on the British constitution, the natural rights of man, or the several charters of the colony, he admits their right to *regulate trade*, but as a right *conceded* to them by the colonies, and only to be exercised on principles which induced the concession, common to all the subjects of the realm.

Pursuing the argument of his adversary, he again vindicates the proceedings of congress; and after reciting the successive acts of usurpation, and the inefficacy of petitions, from the fact that parliament had never abandoned the *right of taxation*, remarks, that the violence of the ministry demanded the adoption of efficacious measures as our only security:" and after eloquently picturing the blockade of Boston, which led to the convention of congress, he thus replies to its alleged illegality:—"When the first principles of civil society are violated, and the rights of a whole people are invaded, the common forms of municipal law are not to be regarded. Men may then betake themselves to the law of nature; and if they but conform their actions to that standard, all cavils against them betray either ignorance or dishonesty. There are some events in society to which human laws cannot extend; but when applied to them, lose all their force and efficacy. In short, when human laws contradict or discountenance the means which are necessary to preserve the essential rights of any society, they defeat the proper end of all laws, and so become null and void."

Having given an able sketch of the commercial relations of the two countries, he shows our means of self-dependence, and confuting his antagonist, who had ridiculed the impotence of our resistance, meets him on the broad ground of arms and independence: confidently affirms our ability

to support our freedom, and by a system of protracted warfare, with the aid of foreign succour, to weary out the mother country, and exhaust her strength.

The following extracts show how far at this early age he anticipated our future resources :—“ With respect to *cotton*, you do not pretend to deny that a sufficient quantity of that may be produced. Several of the southern colonies are so favourable to it, that, with due cultivation, in a couple of years they would afford enough to clothe the whole continent. As to the expense of bringing it by land, the best way will be to *manufacture* it where it grows, and afterwards transport it to the other colonies. Upon this plan, I apprehend, the expense would not be greater than to build and equip large ships to import the manufactures of Great Britain from thence. If we were to turn our attention from external to internal commerce, we would give greater stability and more lasting prosperity to our country than she can possibly have otherwise. We should not then import the vices and luxuries of foreign climes, nor should we make hasty strides to public corruption and depravity. Those obstacles which to the eye of timidity and apprehension appear like the Alps, to the hand of resolution and perseverance become mere hillocks.” In reference to the mode of conducting the war, he remarks : “ Let it be remembered there are no large plains for the two armies to meet in and decide the contest by some decisive stroke, where any advantage gained by either side must be prosecuted, till a complete victory is obtained. The circumstances of our country put it in our power to evade a pitched battle. It will be better policy to harass and exhaust the soldiery by frequent skirmishes and incursions, than to take the open field with them, by which means they would have the full benefit of their superior regularity and skill. Americans are better qualified for that kind of fighting, which is most adapted to the country, than regu-

lar troops: should the soldiery advance into the country, as they would be obliged to do, if they had any inclination to subdue us, their discipline would be of little use to them. Whatever may be said of the disciplined troops of Britain, the event of the contest must be extremely doubtful. There is a certain enthusiasm in liberty, that makes human nature rise above itself in acts of bravery and heroism." Speaking of foreign succour, he observes: "The most that can be expected from France, Spain, and Holland, is, that they would refrain from an open rupture with Great Britain. They would undoubtedly take every clandestine method to introduce among us supplies of those things which we stood in need of, to carry on the dispute. They would not neglect any thing in their power to make the opposition on our part as vigorous and obstinate as our affairs would admit of. But it *seems to me* a mark of great credulity to believe, upon the strength of their assurance, that France and Spain would not take a *still more interesting part in the affair*. The disjunction of these colonies from Britain, and the acquisition of a free trade with them, are objects of too inviting a complexion to suffer those kingdoms to remain idle spectators of the contention. If they found us inclined to throw ourselves upon their protection, they would eagerly embrace the opportunity to weaken their antagonist, and strengthen themselves. Superadded to these general and prevailing inducements, there are others of a more particular nature. They would feel no small inconvenience in the loss of those supplies they annually get from us, and their islands would be in the greatest distress for the want of our trade. From these reflections it is more than probable, that America is able to support its freedom, even by the force of arms, if she be not betrayed by her own sons."

The firm and confident temper manifested in these pamphlets, gave them a most rapid and extensive popularity. They were immediately appealed to by the whigs, as tri-

umphant defences of their opinions and conduct, and curiosity was alive to discover their author. They were generally attributed to Governor Livingston and to Mr. Jay, and these distinguished men gained from them, for a time, increased celebrity; but when, on the inquiry to which of these two individuals the public were indebted for this great service, the author was ascertained to be Alexander Hamilton, a youth about eighteen, but recently admitted to college, and new to the country, admiration of the works was lost in surprise at the discovery. By many it was doubted. "I remember," says Colonel Troup, "that in a conversation I once had with Doctor Cooper about the answer, he insisted that Mr. Jay must be the author of it, it being absurd to imagine that so young a man as Hamilton could have written it;" and the positive assertions of Troup and Mulligan, "to whom parts of it had been read in the progress of composition, seemed hardly sufficient to dispel the doubt.*

Signal distinction followed the disclosure. Hamilton was at once regarded as a prodigy of intellect:—anxious inquiries poured in from the other colonies. "Sir," said the gallant Willet, "Sears was a warm man, but with little reflection; McDougal was strong-minded, and Jay appearing to fall in with the measures of Sears, tempered and controlled them; but Hamilton, after these great writings, became our oracle;" and from being known in New-York as the eloquent collegian, he was distinguished in the public press by the appellation of "The Vindicator of Congress."

When the vigour and terseness of style, the mass of in-

* The importance of gaining such an adversary, was felt by the friends of the crown; and it is related by a cotemporary of his, now living, that a most liberal offer was tendered to Hamilton by Dr. Cooper, if he would consent to write in behalf of the ministry. It is unnecessary to add, that it was rejected.

formation, the closeness of reasoning, the happy exposition of the weak points of his antagonist, the clear perception of the principles of political liberty which the American revolution has rendered familiar, and chiefly the comprehensive and prophetic view which is taken of the great questions then discussed, and which involved not less the destinies of the British empire, than of all others, are considered, these pamphlets will be admitted to possess merits of which the most practised statesman might be proud, and when regarded as the productions of such a youth, are unrivalled.

The latter of these publications appeared in February, seventeen hundred and seventy-five, at that gloomy period of suspense when every eye was directed to England, waiting the result of the proceedings of the late congress, and when not a ray of relief broke upon the view. The rejection of Lord Chatham's conciliatory bill, which was soon after known, dissipated every remaining hope of peaceable redress.

In New-York, the ministerial party maintained their ascendancy in the assembly, although not without a severe and persevering conflict. Not daring longer to defend the measures of the ministry, they sought by holding out the prospect of a favourable answer to their petitions, and by assuring to their constituents a special exemption from the common calamity, to quiet the minds and paralyze the efforts of the people. The opposition in this body was still led by two men of the most determined resolution, — Philip Schuyler and George Clinton, — who, together with John Jay, were the leading patriots of New-York; and when the importance of the concurrence of this province, and the embarrassments with which it was surrounded, are taken into view, contending, at the same time, with the whole influence of the ministry, with the power of the co-

lonial government, adroitly exercised, with a large body of its wealthy proprietors actively co-operating with the timid portion of the mercantile community, amid a divided population and distracted councils, it is difficult to measure the value of their services.

The first of these, Colonel Schuyler, had been a partizan officer in the war of seventeen hundred and fifty-six. By his fertility of resource and unyielding energy, he rendered distinguished services to the British commander,* who fell, lamented, by his side, and to him the honour of his interment was confided. Descended from one of the early Dutch settlers of this province, the influence and respectability of whose family had been transmitted through successive generations, he exercised an almost unrivalled sway over the minds of the descendants of a people, whose first mention in history, as a distinct political community, is associated with the assertion of their liberties.

Possessed of great wealth, he embarked it in the contest, as a pledge of his patriotism, and, in the course of the revolution, sacrificed as much of fortune and of feeling, as any other individual in America.

Party to the most secret councils of the continent, he had staked every thing on the issue of the conflict, and had acquired a weight of influence which led both Virginia and Massachusetts to regard him as the connecting link in the great purposes at which they aimed. "On the shoulders of this great man," said Judge Benson, "the conduct of New-York rested."

His love of fame was less than his love of country ; and when the misadventures of some robbed him of the glory to which he was entitled, and while artifice withheld from him an opportunity of vindication, he is not seen indulging in invidious comments on the successes of others, but con-

* Lord Howe.

tinuing within the sphere of his great influence and resources, to advance the cause of his early preference. Thus, his strength of character sustained him when other men sink, and his adversity gave him more true honour than he could have derived from success.* Sullied by no private vices, and misled by no small passions, his path through life was high, unspotted, equal; and he died with a reputation, which those who knew and followed him, have contended to perpetuate.

Sprung from a family of Irish descent, which counted among their ancestry a gallant officer of the cavaliers who fell with Charles the First, — George Clinton, in a nobler cause, displayed all the perseverance and courage of his blood.

In early youth he broke from the thrall of parental authority, and exchanged for his father's house, a birth on board of a privateer, in which he made a cruise during the French war. He is next seen in service with his father and brother, in an attack which resulted in the capture of Frontignac. He then became a lawyer, and was placed soon after in that sphere in which he was the associate of Schuyler, in opposition to the influence of the crown. Transferred by the popular choice to the continental congress, he took part in the measures of 1775 and 1776, and on the formation of the constitution of the state of New-York, was chosen its governor, and filled that station during a period of eighteen years. On the first call to arms, he was appointed a brigadier general, and during the most trying years of the war commanded in the Highlands, and held the keys of that natural citadel. In intrepidity,

* "I hope," said Mr. Jay, "you will seriously determine to serve your country, at least in a legislative capacity. Class yourself with those great men of antiquity, who, unmoved by the ingratitude of their country, omitted no opportunities of promoting the public weal." — 12th February, 1778.

perseverance, and love of liberty, he was not less distinguished than his great compatriot ; but in the modes of attaining their objects, and in their political views, they were most unlike. By Schuyler, the declaration of independence was regarded but as the first step toward the creation of a great nation, pledged to the principles which that instrument proclaimed. With Clinton, the love of liberty was a fiercer passion.

In Schuyler, it was a principle of high benevolence, enlarging with the sphere of action. With Clinton, it was a jealousy of power, contracting and deforming the object of his adoration. The one, conscious of his own imperfections, regarded mankind with a kindred feeling, as full of weaknesses from which they were to be protected. The other, with a profound knowledge of human nature, and consummate talents for popularity, looked more to the passions of men, as a field from which could be gathered a store of influence for his own advancement. The one aided in building up the constitution of the United States on the basis of a firm and perpetual union. The other, had he prevailed, would have doomed them to perpetual anarchy.

John Jay, younger than either, was educated for the bar, and had already acquired celebrity in his profession. His father, the descendant of a persecuted Hugonot, established himself in the vicinity of New-Rochelle, where, surrounded by a small community who traced their origin and their adversities to the same source, he pursued an agricultural life, and preserved all the simplicity of habits and purity of character, which had been cultivated by the protestants in France, amid the various vicissitudes of their fortunes. Educated in such a school, he espoused the cause of liberty, with an ardour equal to the zeal with which he defended it, and soon acquired the ascendancy, to which his probity, and the soundness of his understanding, entitled him.

By some, his jealousy of error was supposed to have run into a proneness to suspicion; and his strict adherence to right, to have bordered on severity; but the basis of his character was a lofty virtue and manly self-dependence. Elevated by these qualities in the public confidence, he rose to some of the highest stations in the civil branch of the government, and long shone conspicuous among the great lights which ushered this nation into existence, — a pure, consistent, and unyielding patriot.

Sustained by the ardent feelings of the other colonies, the exertions of these men to secure the concert of the government of New-York were unremitting, but vain. The majority of the assembly would not be diverted from their servile counsels, and although their efforts towards conciliation had been treated by the ministry with contumely and neglect, they still refused their sanction to those commercial restrictions which the congress had recommended, and a motion to appoint delegates to the second congress, was negatived by a majority of two to one.

To counteract this influence, the popular committees increased their numbers and their activity, and taking advantage of every violation of the associations, kept alive the spirit of their partizans by glowing appeals to their love of country. All expectation of obtaining the concurrence of the assembly being at last abandoned, on the fifth day of March, seventeen hundred and seventy-five, a meeting of the citizens of New-York was convened, in order to obtain a representation in the approaching congress. The ministerial party determined to put down this attempt, and as soon as the patriots assembled, resorted to violence. The popular party was surprised and defeated, but soon rallied, and having collected arms, routed their antagonists. The victory was decisive.* The election of delegates to a pro-

* March 15, 1775. Votes in favour, nine hundred and twenty-nine; against, one hundred and forty-three. There were then two thousand five hundred voters in the city.

vincial convention was held, and the concurrence of New-York ultimately secured.

This body met in the ensuing month, and even in that assemblage was found much of the timidity which had characterized the representatives they were chosen to succeed. While they recommended to their constituents to exercise themselves with arms, they still indulged the delusive hope of redress. Day after day, in the earlier part of their session, they remonstrated against the incursions into Canada, and finally* adopted a plan of accommodation with the ministry.† But the battle of Lexington had been fought; the war cry was raised, and the American people were convinced that nothing remained to them but an appeal to the sword.

In New-England the hardy yeomanry abandoned their homes and husbandry, and rushed to the conflict. In the other colonies, as the intelligence reached them, on all sides were heard bursts of popular indignation, and cries to arms. In New-Jersey the provincial treasury was seized. In Philadelphia the shipping was embargoed; and in Maryland and Virginia the public arms and ammunition were secured. When the news of the skirmish reached New-York, and it was announced in the concluding words of a letter "that the crimson fountain was opened, and God only knew when it would close," tumultuous menace and execration followed. Patroles were immediately employed and, directed by Sears and Willet, the popular leaders, took their rounds throughout the night as if the enemy were at their doors. Mobs assembled; the keys of the custom house were seized, the armory broken open; and, dismayed by the irresistible impetuosity of the populace, a

* June 24, 1775.

† A company of troops was directed to receive General Washington or Governor Tryon, *whichever should first arrive.*

battalion of the royal troops was compelled to surrender their weapons and leave the city.

Congress met in May, 1775, and intelligence being received of the destination of forces for America, assumed all the powers of a paramount superintending sovereignty, and exercised some of its highest attributes. They proceeded to organize an army, and to establish a general post. Washington was elected commander-in-chief; — the accession of Georgia completed the confederacy; and, as the point most exposed, five thousand men were ordered to be raised for the protection of New-York. In that colony the leaders were now on the alert. Positions were taken to command the Hudson; alarm posts were established; the counties were divided into military districts; officers were chosen under the superintendence of committees, which were then the chief engines of government. The members of the provincial convention partaking of the general enthusiasm, pledged their personal responsibility for loans made to the colony, and with a signal magnanimity and self-devotion, a letter was addressed by the committee of safety to General Lee, the commanding officer in New-York, on the twenty-first of January, 1776, in which some of them held large estates, authorizing him to devote the city to flames, if he deemed it a necessary sacrifice for advancing the cause of the revolution.

After the expulsion of the royal troops, that city remained quiet until the arrival of Tryon, late governor of North Carolina, recently appointed to the government of New-York, a man of energy, courage, and decision.

His arrival reanimated the royalists; and although the patriots retained their ascendancy, a sufficient diversion was created to keep up a feverish alarm.

While these events were passing in rapid succession, Hamilton was not inactive. His mind roused to enthusiasm in the cause which he had espoused, was constantly

generating new arguments to sustain it ; and the leisure which he had from his collegiate duties was employed in frequent contributions to the press. In June, seventeen hundred and seventy-five, with a view to confirm the opinion that the English ministry had abandoned every regard to the principles of her constitution, he published a series of "Remarks on the Quebec Bill," a measure which had been resisted in the British Parliament by the whole force of the opposition, and kindled in the bosoms of the Americans, at this moment of irritation, the most angry suspicions. Unable to discover the particular motive of policy which prompted such an enactment at this time, they viewed it as containing some hidden purpose of hostility to themselves, and as an example of the extent to which a British ministry would exercise an arbitrary authority over the other colonies, if the least encroachment was submitted to.

While Canada was a French province, the French laws and customs were in force there, which were regulated in conformity with the genius and disposition of a despotic government. When it fell under the dominion of Britain, these laws gave place to the milder influence of the English laws ; and all persons who settled in Canada were, by a proclamation of the king of Great Britain, assured a full enjoyment of the rights of British subjects. By this act, that proclamation and the government exercised under it, were annulled after the first of January, 1775. The French laws were restored, and a power reserved to the executive authority of the provinces of altering the laws at pleasure, and, by a further provision, the free exercise of the Roman catholic religion (subject to the king's supremacy) was guarantied to the people ; and the clergy of that church were declared entitled to hold and enjoy their accustomed dues and rights.

The "Remarks" were published in two numbers. The first on the fifteenth of June, 1775, in a brief, but close ex-

amination of the terms of the act, commented forcibly on the arbitrary character of this bill, which placed the laws and government of the province under the sole discretion of the prince ; conferred on him the most extraordinary and dangerous prerogative, that of creating courts of criminal, civil, and ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and appointing temporary judges, whose commissions were revocable at pleasure ; and that of making the trial by jury dependent on the will of the provincial legislature ; thus showing that an arbitrary government had been established in that extensive region.

The purport of the second number, was to prove that the church of Rome had the sanction of a legal establishment in that province. It is an able refutation of an essay, which professed to show, that by this act, the catholic religion was merely *tolerated* ; and giving a very precise and accurate definition of an established religion, it deduces clearly from the terms of the act, that the catholic religion is placed on the footing of a regular establishment, while the protestant is “left entirely destitute and unbefriended.”

The dangers to their protestant neighbours of the vicinity of a colony of Roman catholics, allured in great numbers by the favour of government, with a dependent clergy, disposed to support absolute power, are strongly portrayed, and an earnest appeal is made to the jealous feelings of the protestant colonies.

These essays are an interesting specimen of the early reach of thought, and precision of language, which were afterwards disclosed by him in so remarkable a degree.

He also repeatedly took part in the public deliberations. One instance is related by a highly respectable member of the Society of Friends. It was a meeting of merchants. Soon after the discussion had opened, Hamilton rose to address them : — “ Ah,” said the gentleman, “ what brings that lad here ? — the poor boy will disgrace himself.” It

was a question as to the non-importation agreement. He argued the necessity of adhering to it while in force, both from obligation and the influence of example, but, at the same time, seeing the approach of war, he contended, that having been adopted only as a measure of resistance, and stronger measures being inevitable, that good policy required the rescinding the agreement by congress, and that those who had violated it should be forgiven, as indirectly benefiting the public.

Congress having published a declaration of their determination to resist by force, and having recommended the embodying throughout the continent of organized companies of militia, Hamilton joined a volunteer corps, commanded by Major Fleming, who had been an adjutant in the British service, and was a skilful and exact disciplinarian. "Under his command he acquired a knowledge of the rudiments of military science, and became expert in its details."*

This company was composed chiefly of young gentlemen of the city, anxious to acquire a knowledge of tactics, with a view to future promotion.

They met for daily exercise in the churchyard of St. George's chapel, early in the morning, before the commencement of their college duties. They assumed the name of "Hearts of Oak," and in their green uniforms and leathern caps, bearing the ominous inscription of "Freedom or Death," attracted the attention of the inhabitants, and are still recollected with enthusiasm by the few survivors of the scene. In this corps were several of the personal friends of Hamilton, among whom were Colonel Fish, afterwards eminently distinguished at the siege of York Town, and Colonel Troup, who served with credit in the northern department, and received the thanks of congress.

While Hamilton was a member of this corps, it was employed in a service of some danger. Having been required

* Colonel Troup.

by the committee to remove the cannon from the Battery, while they were thus occupied, a boat of the *Asia*, man-of-war, approached, with the design, as was believed, of preventing their removal. The boat was fired upon by the citizens, which drew a broadside from the ship, "during which, Hamilton, who was aiding in the removal of the cannon, exhibited the greatest unconcern, although one of his companions was killed by his side," and was thus connected in the minds of the people with the first act of resistance to the first act of violence offered to the province.

A violent commotion was the consequence of this attack. The liberty mobs collected and traversed the streets, threatening personal injuries to every adherent of the crown. In the height of their excitement, they approached the college, with a view to seize the person of the president, Doctor Cooper, an obnoxious tory. As they drew near his residence, Hamilton and Troup ascended the steps, and fearful lest in this moment of irritation they might commit some excess, Hamilton, in order to give the president time to escape, harangued the mob, with great eloquence and animation, "on the excessive impropriety of their conduct, and the disgrace they were bringing on the cause of liberty, of which they professed to be the champions." He succeeded in diverting their attention, until the alarmed clergyman (who, at first, imagining he was exciting the populace, exclaimed from an upper window, "Don't listen to him, gentlemen, he is crazy, he is crazy!") took refuge in the ship of war.*

By a similar exhibition of firmness, he interposed with a concourse of people known as "Travis' mob," and diverted their rage from Mr. Thurman, whose conduct as a member of one of the committees, had aroused their indignation, and whose life was menaced.

* Letter of Colonel Troup to Colonel Pickering.

At this time, the popular commotions became frequent ; the royalists who had fled from the other colonies to New-York for safety, were compelled to leave it ; and such was the distempered state of feeling, that Tryon, the last royal governor, a man of intrepid courage, fearful of his life, took refuge on board the Halifax packet, whence he issued his disregarded mandates.

The press of Rivington, the tory printer, was the last object of attack. By occasionally printing for the popular side, he had preserved some appearance of neutrality, but as the controversy ripened, he took a decided part with the royalists. On the twenty-third of November, a party of horse from Connecticut, under the command of Sears, appeared in the city, with the avowed design of destroying his press. Heading the mob, they proceeded in the dusk of evening to rifle its contents. Hamilton again appeared the advocate of order, and relying on his former success, renewed his appeals to the discretion of the citizens, and, indignant at the encroachment of unlicensed troops from another colony, offered to join in opposition to the intruders, and check their progress. His exhortation was unsuccessful. The outrage was perpetrated, but his interference was not without happy consequences. It elevated him still more in the estimation of the patriots, who saw in his love of order and respect for the authority of the laws, assurances of those high qualities which, rising above the wild uproar of the times, disdained to win popularity from popular delusion.

CHAPTER IV.

DURING the winter of seventeen hundred and seventy-six, while England was making a powerful effort for the subjugation of her colonies, and an act of parliament had been passed declaring them in open rebellion, the general congress were chiefly occupied with measures to repair the losses that attended the northern campaign, which, after the most arduous exertions, had terminated with the fall of Montgomery, before the walls of Quebec ; an event which, from the recollection of the death of Wolfe, the heroism of the attempt, the immense efforts which had been made, and the hardships encountered, deeply engaged the sympathies of his countrymen, and caused his loss to be deplored as a great national calamity.*

The failure of this expedition changed the whole aspect of affairs. Instead of securing the co-operation of the Canadas, and presenting to the enemy an unbroken line of hostility, the utmost exertions were requisite to maintain the posts which had been won with so much gallantry in the preceding spring, to suppress the disaffection that eagerly displayed itself, and to prevent a junction of the forces of the enemy, which must have left the larger portion of the colonies an easy and unassisted prey to their overwhelming numbers.

Hamilton, during the previous winter, foreseeing that the course of events must soon lead to an open rupture, determined to apply himself to the study of arms, and before any steps were taken to organize a regular force, had by great

* It was announced in these words, — “ Weep, America ! for thou hast lost one of thy most virtuous and bravest sons.”

assiduity, made such progress as books and the instruction of a British bombardier could give him in pyrotechnics and gunnery.

The convention of New-York having determined to augment its military establishment, among other arrangements ordered a company of artillery to be raised.* Hamilton seized this opportunity to enter the service, and was recommended to the convention by his friend McDougal, who had been appointed colonel of the first regiment raised in the province. A doubt having been intimated of his knowledge of that branch of arms, McDougal proposed that he should undergo an examination, and on a certificate being given of his competency, he was appointed, on the fourteenth day of March, seventeen hundred and seventy-six, "Captain of the Provincial Company of Artillery," and within a short time after was directed to guard the records of the colony. "Hamilton," says Mulligan, by whom he was aided, "recruited his men, and with the remnant of the second and last remittance which he received from Santa Cruz, equipped them. He attended to their drill and his other duties with a degree of zeal and diligence which soon made his company conspicuous for their appearance, and the regularity of their movements."

His first lieutenant having been transferred to another command, he took this occasion to enforce, in a letter to the convention, the policy of advancing officers in succession, in which he added, "I would beg the liberty warmly to recommend to your attention the first sergeant in my company, — a man highly deserving notice and preferment. He has discharged his duty in his present station with uncommon fidelity, assiduity, and expertness; he is a very good disciplinarian, possesses the advantage of having seen a good deal of service in Germany, and has a tolerable share

* January 6, 1776.

of common sense. In a word, I verily believe he will make an excellent lieutenant, and his advancement will be a great encouragement and benefit to my company in particular, and will be an animating example to all men of merit to whose knowledge it comes." Hamilton, in this suggestion, paid a debt of gratitude, and, at the same time, inculcated a measure, the efficacy of which was demonstrated in various instances.

The convention adopted the suggestion. The brave bombardier was promoted to a lieutenancy, and rising to the command of a company, Captain Thomson fell at the battle of Springfield, at the head of his men, after gallantly repulsing a desperate charge of the enemy. A general resolution was at the same time published by the convention, assuring "promotion to such privates and non-commissioned officers as should distinguish themselves." Captain Hamilton seems not to have permitted the duties of his profession to divert him wholly from the course of study in which he had been engaged. His military books of this period give an interesting exhibition of his train of thought. In the pay book of his company, amid various general speculations and extracts from the ancients, chiefly relating to politics and war, are intermingled tables of political arithmetic, considerations on commerce, the value of the relative productions which are its objects, the balance of trade, the progress of population, and the principles on which depend the value of a circulating medium; and among his papers, there remains a carefully digested outline of a plan for the political and commercial history of British America, compiled at this time.

Thus a fund of knowledge was early gathered by him, which his powerful intellect soon after applied to the condition of the new republic, and rapidly matured into results of extensive utility.

But the term of these studies was soon closed. The

independence of the American states was declared by congress, and on the same day Lord Howe with his invading army landed in the vicinity of New-York.

The heights of Brooklyn, a small village opposite New-York, on the southern banks of the Sound, was the position selected by General Lee to meet the first impression of the enemy. Its natural advantages for defence were not great. The extensive line of approach rendered a division of the defensive force unavoidable, and there was little in its situation to prevent the expected battle being fought on nearly equal terms, while the difficulty of retreat filled the minds of the undisciplined troops with dismay.

Washington balanced between the dangers of this post, and the alarming effects which he apprehended from a surrender of New-York without an attempt at defence. The British took advantage of the interval, and the battle of Long Island ensued.

The result of this action proved the perilous position of the army; and although the mode of its escape was a subject of commendation, yet the course of the engagement and conduct of the troops disclosed to the eye of the commander all the weakness and disorganized state of his forces, and filled his mind with a sad presage of the future. In the retreat, Captain Hamilton brought up the rear, having lost his baggage and a field-piece.

An important question as to the course to be pursued with regard to the city of New-York had meanwhile occupied the mind of Washington. Was it to be destroyed or not? The subsequent events of the war proved the impolicy of the national councils on this point; but the following extract from a letter* of the commander-in chief to congress shows, that in this decision he had no part.

“If we should be obliged to abandon the town, *ought it to stand* as winter quarters for the enemy? They would

* September 2, 1776.

derive great convenience from it on the one hand, and much property would be destroyed on the other. It is an important question, and will admit of but little time for deliberation. At present, I dare say, the enemy mean to preserve it if they can. If congress should resolve upon the destruction of it, the resolution should be kept a profound secret, as the knowledge of it will make a capital change in their plan." Congress resolved to save the city.*

Immediately after the action, the Americans evacuated the city of New-York, leaving a small force in the field-works which had been erected on the eminences that skirted the Sound, opposite to which a portion of the British fleet were soon after moored, to cover the approach of that part of the troops which were ordered to take possession of the city. "I recollect," says a survivor of the scene, "as though it were yesterday, the day when the British fleet came up. Fascines had been extended across the Broadway near the Bowling Green, where the statue of Chatham was thrown down. On the west side of the town the barricades were built of a cargo of mahogany; but this was all a show to keep up the spirits of the people; for I myself heard General Wooster laugh at the idea of defence.

"Along the shores of the Hudson were piled in little heaps, by which the women and children were sitting, the gathered furniture of the timid, who were anxiously but vainly looking for the means of transportation from the opposite shores of the Jersey. The half-armed militia were seen parading in small parties through the streets, who, incensed at the approach of the enemy, every now and then discharged a volley on some unfortunate tory who was skulking away; while at intervals were heard the ringing of the small brass pieces on the battery, which the two frigates that passed up the Hudson hardly cared to answer. As the

* September 3.

boats came near, filled with soldiers, they were drawn by the tide into the form of a crescent. I never saw so beautiful a sight ; the sun shone out bright, and the water was without a ripple."

The next position taken was the heights of Harlem, at which place, says Benson, Hamilton first attracted the observant eye of Washington, who, on the inspection of the works which he was engaged in throwing up, entered into conversation with him, invited him to his *marquée*, and formed a high estimate of his military capacity.

Captain Hamilton remained with the main army until the battle of White Plains,* where his conduct was remarked ; whence, on the retreat of Washington to North Castle, and the advance of Knyphausen to Kingsbridge, he was detached to cover a post in the neighbourhood of Fort Washington. The fall of that fortress, which sealed the fate of the city of New-York, and cut off so large a portion of the army, awakened all the soldier's spirit in his breast ; and, after a careful observation of the post, he volunteered to General Washington to storm it ; saying, that if he would confide to him an adequate number of men, one half under the command of Major Stevens,† the residue of himself, he would promise him success. But the small number of the troops, and the position and strength of the enemy forbade this gallant enterprise, to which Hamilton was encouraged by a knowledge of its defences, and by the ease with which it had fallen.

After the British had crossed the Hudson, he succeeded in joining the army on the west side of that river.

On the approach of the enemy, they retreated first to Hackensack, and thence to Newark. Here Washington, reinforced by Stirling's and Hand's brigades, called a council of officers.

* October 28.

† The late General Ebenezer Stevens.

By some of the members it was urged to move the army to Morristown, to form a junction with the northern troops, who were winding along the mountains of Sussex ; but Washington and Greene concurred in the more hazardous and intrepid determination, if possible, to make a stand at Brunswick ; but, at all events, to dispute the passage of the Delaware.

After a short repose, with a force not exceeding three thousand men, half clothed, many of them unarmed, without cavalry to protect them from surprises, debilitated by fatigue, and worn down by a series of disasters, Washington was compelled again to retire, closely pursued by a detachment of eight thousand men under the command of Lord Cornwallis. The Americans succeeded in making an undisturbed retreat until they approached the vicinity of New-Brunswick ; there, as the rear of the American levies crossed the Raritan, the van of the British came in sight. The bridge having been destroyed, and knowing that the river was fordable, Hamilton, while the army was parading, planted his field-pieces on the high grounds which command the river, and, by a spirited cannonade, aided in checking the progress of the British, while Washington decamping after night-fall, reached Princeton on the morning of the first of December.

“ Well do I recollect the day,” said a friend, “ when Hamilton’s company marched into Princeton. It was a model of discipline ; at their head was a boy, and I wondered at his youth ; but what was my surprise, when struck with his diminutive figure, he was pointed out to me as that Hamilton of whom we had already heard so much.”

He continued with his company, which, from the severity of the weather, and its exposure in the brilliant enterprises of Trenton and Princeton, was reduced to a fragment of five-and-twenty men, until the establishment of head quarters at Morristown, when, at the invitation of General Wash-

ington, on the first of March, seventeen hundred and seventy-seven, he was appointed his aid-de-camp, with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

The situation of New-Jersey during the progress of the hostile armies, was more calamitous than that of any portion of the country under all the trials of the revolution.

Its position between the two great central colonies of America, had for a long time, protected it from the harassing exposure to which the out settlements were subject, and the great body of its people were pursuing their rural occupations in quiet and security.

With but little foreign commerce to feel directly the exactions of Great Britain, and with few causes of internal dissatisfaction with their governors, the spirit of resistance which this colony evinced, is a remarkable evidence of the rapid growth of popular sentiments. New-Jersey was, in fact, as to any present evils, scarcely a party to the question then in agitation; but there, as in other parts of America, the love of liberty which had been cultivated in a few generous bosoms,* quickened the mass of the people, and no sooner was opposition aroused, than she was seen entrusting her fortunes to committees and conventions, the great instruments of political hostility.

But the ardour which had enkindled the inhabitants of that colony, had neither anticipated nor prepared them for the scenes in which they were so early to participate.

* The exertions of Mr. Alexander, (Lord Stirling,) were particularly conspicuous. At the beginning of the controversy, he was a member of the king's council of that state, and his correspondence with the governor gives an amusing view of that doubtful allegiance to the king and to the people which was sought to be preserved and justified. He served through the war, and died in 1783, when Washington, in a letter to congress, paid this high tribute to his courage and patriotism, — "The remarkable bravery, intelligence, and promptitude of his lordship, to perform his duty as an officer, had endeared him to the whole army, and now make his loss the more sincerely regretted." — Dated January 20, 1783.

The arrival of the British army in New-York seemed hardly to have awakened them from their security ; and when the determination of Washington to cross the Hudson, threw upon them, of a sudden, the whole weight of war, scenes of unmitigated suffering ensued.

In the track of the pursuing army bridges were broken down, dwellings destroyed, granaries plundered, and even the traces of the fugitives were seen printed on the snow with their blood. While many fled before the enemy, the condition of those who remained was doubly pitiable. Some sought security in protections ; intestine feuds followed ; every social feeling seemed to be suspended ; and in the general insecurity, suspicion was deemed a virtue. Straggling bands of plunderers were seen stealing along the margin of the water courses, and by the unfrequented roads. Parties of horse, foraging at a distance, broke in, during the night, upon the unhappy people who had taken shelter in the woods, directed by the fires near which they were cowering. The rich had removed their wives and children to New-England, while the women of the poor were seized, flying in terror to the interior, where, at the recital of the barbarities they had endured, parties were formed, who came down upon the disaffected with infuriated passions, to wreak vengeance for their wrongs. Even the friends of the cause were compelled to wrestle with the famished American soldiers for their secreted provisions.

Amidst all which, their patriotic governor was constantly issuing mandates against disaffection, and giving to resistance the stronger motive of religious duty. The places of worship were deserted, and the clergy were seen inciting the people to arms, thus rendering fiercer and more odious the ferocious face of war.

The Americans, at the close of this campaign, were reduced to few more than twelve hundred troops, enlisted for short terms of service, at the expiration of which, scarce-

ly an inducement could be offered for their re-enlistment. The selection of the post at Morristown was, under these circumstances, particularly eligible, and had been made at the instance of the unfortunate St. Clair. Protected by inaccessible heights and heavy forests from the approach of any large body of the enemy, it had the advantage of being almost equi-distant from Amboy, Newark, and New-Brunswick, their principal positions, which were all held in check, while it was secure of a retreat by various defiles in its rear, leading to a fertile and well-peopled country.

But deficient as was the army, if it may so be called, in numbers, the severe campaign of the Jerseys had produced the happiest effect, in disclosing to the commander-in-chief the character of his officers, and in drawing around him in a common devotion to its cause, the most gallant patriots of the country.

Surrounded by the greatest difficulties, they had themselves learned, and their example had taught the American people the all-important lesson, that their enemy was not invincible, and their common dangers had inspired a mutual confidence, which, towards the person of their chief, rose to the highest point of enthusiasm.

Indeed, in the long life of glory with which Washington was blessed, this may be selected as the moment when his popularity was greatest. The reverses which had befallen the army at the commencement of the campaign, had scarcely left a hope for America short of unconditional submission; but when, in the language of Colonel Hamilton,* “after escaping the grasp of a disciplined and victorious enemy, this little band of patriots were seen skilfully avoiding an engagement until they could contend with advantage, and then, by the masterly enterprises of Trenton and Princeton, cutting them up in detachments, rallying the

* Eulogium on General Greene.

scattered energies of the country, infusing terror into the breasts of their invaders, and changing the whole tide and fortune of the war," a general spirit of enthusiasm pervaded the nation, and every bosom swelled with gratitude to Washington and his illustrious companions.

Among these, the reputation of General Greene deservedly stood highest.

Connected with every important movement of the main army from the investment of Boston until this moment, he displayed, in all its various difficulties, an unbending constancy, a readiness of decision, a fertility of resource, and a masterly self-possession, which proved him in every eminent military qualification second to no other officer of the army, and had given him an influence with the commander-in-chief, which in the future incidents of the revolution, was exerted most happily for the service. Of him it was not less truly than eloquently said, "that he carried in his native genius all the resources of war, and the balance of every extreme of fortune." His eminent and distinguished excellence early attracted the respect of Colonel Hamilton; an intimacy followed of the closest character; by none of his comrades were the merits of General Greene more fully understood, and, as will be seen in the future pages of this work, by none could they have been more warmly portrayed.

Next in rank to Greene was Major General Sullivan. This gentleman having acquired an extensive reputation as a lawyer in the colony of New-Hampshire, was elected to represent it in the celebrated congress of seventy-four. In this situation he commanded respect and confidence as a man of firmness and intelligence; and having been re-elected a delegate, on the selection of the general staff of the army, Sullivan was appointed to the command of a brigade, then on duty near Boston. Early in seventy-six, he received orders for the northern army, with which he served

until the approaching invasion of New-York, when he again rejoined the main army, and was captured in the battle of Long Island. Immediately after his exchange, he resumed his command, and in the action of Trenton, at the head of the right wing, discovered equal gallantry and good conduct. Of proverbial courage, quick apprehension, and observing a scrupulous obedience to his instructions, he was usually selected for stations which required determined intrepidity, and in no instance did he disappoint the trust which was reposed in him.

The first regiment of artillery raised on the continental establishment had been confided to Henry Knox, a native of Boston, who, leaving a lucrative employment, joined the army as a volunteer in the battle of Bunker's Hill. Alarmed at the deficiency of ordnance which gave the enemy such vast superiority, Knox, full of ardour, hastened to the Canadian frontier, where, by great personal exertions, he was enabled in some measure to supply this essential want. The enterprise he displayed in this instance received the grateful approbation of the commander-in-chief. He was appointed a colonel of artillery, and on the increase of that corps obtained the rank of Major General.

Of great integrity, a sound understanding, and undaunted courage, he was soon classed among the individuals who most deserved the public confidence; and on occasions when the service was the more meritorious, because it was necessarily secret, he was eminently useful. Frank, open, and sincere, he won and preserved the regard of his brother officers, and could boast that which was alone a sufficient passport to consideration, of being the man whom "Washington loved."

But the officer who at this time, next to Greene, possessed most the personal confidence of the commander, was General John Cadwallader. This gentleman, formed by education to adorn the most polished circles of society,

combined with a clear and vigorous understanding, a bold spirit of enterprise and generosity of temper, which rose above the difficulties of every situation, and inspired among his followers the highest sense of personal attachment.

Hurried away by his ardour, he had suffered himself to be taken a prisoner at the same time with General Sullivan. His manly qualities made a strong impression in the camp of the enemy, and great, but vain, exertions were used to induce him to influence Washington in favour of conciliation. On his liberation, he returned to the army; and in the bold attempts to repulse the British from the borders of the Delaware, he was entrusted with a most important and difficult share in the enterprise. His merits soon forced him upon the attention of Congress. At the close of the campaign he was promoted to the command of a brigade, and continued during a great part of the Revolution serving under the immediate eye of Washington.

The gentlemen who at this time composed the personal staff of the commander-in-chief were, Colonel Robert H. Harrison, a native of Maryland, who at an early age removed to Alexandria, where, as a member of the bar, he was employed by Washington, who, soon after he took the command at Cambridge, wrote him an urgent letter to join the army, which he did, in the capacity of an aid-de-camp; and, in the following year, was appointed his principal secretary; to the performance of the arduous duties of which office his health, and ultimately his life, became a sacrifice. He was most commonly known as the "Old Secretary;" discreet, indefatigable, ingenuous, fearless — an officer in whom every man had confidence, and by whom no man was deceived. — The generous and accomplished Tilghman, — the amiable and chivalric Meade, with whom Hamilton was a welcome associate, and became Washington's "principal and most confidential aid."

The intercourse of his staff was of the happiest kind; and

the fact related by Lafayette, that, during a familiar association of five years, not an instance of disagreement occurred, is a remarkable evidence of the tone of feeling which prevailed.

Harrison, who was much the elder, treated Hamilton with parental kindness, and soon after he had entered the family, gave him the epithet of "The Little Lion," a term of endearment by which he was familiarly known among his bosom friends to the close of his life.

CHAPTER V.

[1777.]

ON his appointment to the staff of Washington, Colonel Hamilton, immediately after his recovery from a very severe indisposition, induced by the hardships of the campaign, wrote to the New-York convention, apprizing them of his change of situation, and suggesting the transfer of his company to the continental establishment.

A reply was received from Messrs. Morris and Allison, announcing "that they had been appointed a committee of the New-York convention, to correspond with him at head quarters," and concurring in his suggestion, as to the disposal of his company. A long and interesting correspondence ensued, parts of which will be presented in their appropriate connexion.

Having served with distinction through the most arduous campaign of the revolution, and having thus entitled himself to rapid promotion in the line of the army, Hamilton hesitated much before he consented to relinquish this prospect for a place in the staff. His high sense of personal independence, had already induced him to decline a similar invitation from two general officers ; but influenced by the reputation of the commander-in-chief, he relinquished his objections, and entered upon the discharge of his duties with all the devotion due to his early and illustrious friend.

This larger and more appropriate sphere of action, gave to his mind not only a wider but a loftier range. He was called, not merely to execute subordinate parts, but to assist in planning campaigns, in devising means to support them, in corresponding with the different members of this extensive empire, and in introducing order and harmony into the general system.

The situation of an aid-de-camp to the commander-in-chief, from the position in which he stood, was among the most arduous that can be imagined. The pressure of the correspondence was that which the general principally felt; and in the selection of the members of his staff, "as to military knowledge," he says in a letter to Colonel Harrison, of the 9th of January, 1777, "I do not expect to find gentlemen much skilled in it; if they can write a good letter, write quick, are methodical and diligent, it is all I expect to find in my aids." And in a subsequent letter to congress,* calling for additional assistance, he remarks "the business that has given constant exercise to the pen of my secretary, and not only frequently, but always, to those of my aids-de-camp, has rendered it impracticable for the former to register the copies of my letters, instructions, &c. in books; by which means, valuable documents, which may be of equal public utility and private satisfaction, remain in loose sheets, and in the rough manner in which they were first drawn."

The principal labour of the correspondence fell upon Colonel Harrison; and even to a limited knowledge of its extent, it is surprising how much and how well it was performed. Soon habituated to the mind of the commander-in-chief, with the brief memoranda which were before him, he seized upon his thoughts, and though in a style perhaps too diffuse, and sometimes hurried, placed them in a most perspicuous light. Tilghman's style partook more of the character of his sprightly temper. His sentences were brief and simple, giving results rather than the processes by which they were reached, and might often be supposed to have been written on the drum-head, but still always breathing throughout a general air of elegance. The more elaborate and important communications, which did not

* Dated New-Windsor, April 4th, 1781, — Addressed to the President of Congress.

proceed from the commander-in-chief, devolved upon Hamilton.

Soon after he had entered the General's family, having closed a correspondence with Governor Livingston as to the punishment of disaffected persons, he was called upon to serve him in that line in which he had become most conspicuous. Amid the various high duties which engrossed his cares, the attention of Washington was at this time particularly directed to a negotiation with the enemy relative to the exchange of prisoners, — a matter always of difficult adjustment, and arousing much national feeling; but in a civil war, such as this, where the policy of England was closely adhered to, of treating it as a rebellion, attended with peculiar embarrassments.

The capture of St. Johns, in the preceding autumn, first invited the cares of congress to this interesting object. In a spirit not less dictated by a liberal view of the interests of nations at war, than by the humanity which is due to the subjects of its calamities, but which is so often forgotten, they immediately directed an equal exchange of prisoners, which was followed by successive resolutions, giving them a choice of residence; directing them to be treated with kindness; making the same provision for them as for their own troops; appointing a commissioned officer to protect them from neglect; and assigning the punctual payment of their allowance as the especial duty of the president of each state convention, or of the speakers of the assemblies.

These regulations were strictly enforced, and every instance of inattention promptly redressed.

The measures taken by the commander-in-chief had corresponded fully with the intentions of congress, and from the commencement until the close of the contest, under the most trying circumstances, he sought every opportunity of adding to the valour of the American arms, the lustre of humanity.

An opposite line of conduct had been adopted by the enemy, and the greatest indignation had been excited by the recitals which were made of the indignities suffered by those Americans who had fallen into their hands.

In the hope of establishing a general principle of exchange, a negotiation had been opened with General Howe, before the commencement of the preceding campaign, to which he had acceded ; but, in his career of success, looking to an early triumph, this agreement had been departed from, and difficulty after difficulty arose in its execution.

The treatment of the prisoners who capitulated at Fort Washington, had been keenly felt at head quarters, and had quickened Washington's anxiety to remove all artificial obstacles ; but the circumstance which at this time chiefly interested him, was the situation of General Lee, who had been captured at Baskenridge, by Colonel Harcourt, and carried to New-York. On learning this event, congress offered in exchange six field officers of inferior rank, one of whom was Colonel Campbell. This proposition was rejected, and General Lee was placed in close confinement, with an intimation that his treatment would be different from that usual towards prisoners of war.

Congress, indignant at this procedure, immediately ordered Colonel Campbell and the Hessian officers into close custody, and threatened retaliation for every indignity offered to the American prisoners.

These decisive measures alarmed the enemy, and on the third of April, 1777, Lord Cornwallis enclosed to General Washington a letter from Colonel Walcott, which was alleged to have been previously delivered to Colonel Harrison, but had not been received.

The temper displayed by the English commissioner evinced little disposition to produce a favourable issue. It seemed rather to have been his design to indulge in a tone of arrogant crimination of the American army, and im-

peachment of the integrity of Washington's motives, than to promote an object mutually desirable, and was conducted in a spirit even more objectionable than that which had marked the correspondence of the preceding year.

The importance of meeting these charges was strongly felt, and the task of vindicating the course which had been adopted, was imposed on Colonel Hamilton. "The pen for our army," says Troup, "was held by Hamilton; and for dignity of manner, pith of matter, and elegance of style, General Washington's letters are unrivalled in military annals."

The effort to establish a cartel failed, in consequence of the determination of Howe not to include Lee within the class of American prisoners; and these unfortunate men were compelled still to endure the privations to which they had been subject; but the negotiation itself was attended with flattering circumstances. The correspondence increased the esteem in which the American character was held in Europe; and their friends proudly referred to it as another evidence that they were not less accomplished with the pen than with the sword.

When the season for military operations opened, the greatest anxiety pervaded the United States as to the course of policy which would be adopted by the enemy.

The concentration of an army in the north, and the obvious policy of seizing the passes in the Highlands, seemed to indicate them as the first object, not only because the campaign might be commenced earlier than in Pennsylvania, as the army would in one case move by water, but having the command of the Hudson, they might, by taking advantage of a southerly wind, run up that river in a few hours, destroy the boats which had been provided on its banks, thus prevent Washington's army from crossing until they had marched to Albany, and, after ravaging the state of New-York, enter Connecticut on the western side, where

the disaffection of a part of the people would ensure them many friends.

This course had also been indicated in the instructions from Great Britain, which directed a portion of the British fleet to be employed in making a diversion on the coast of New-England, and thus perhaps compel her to withdraw a part of her troops composing the northern army, and certainly check the progress of enlistment.

An expedition to Peekskill, late in March, (a post at the foot of the Highlands,) under the command of General McDougal, where large munitions of war were supposed to be, and which the gallantry of Colonel Willet prevented from being more disastrous ; — the destruction of the stores at Danbury, where the intrepid Wooster fell, and the movement of the enemy towards Amboy, all conspired to confirm this supposition. To meet this event, the Convention of New-York strained every nerve, having authorized Governor Clinton, to whom the security of the Highlands had been entrusted, to make such drafts from the militia as he might deem necessary, by whose orders every third man was drawn from the southern, and every fifth man from the northern counties. And, indeed, at no other moment were the duties of patriotism more urgent in that quarter. Of the fourteen counties of New-York, five, and a part of a sixth, were at this time in the possession of the enemy ; a single galley was riding the Hudson triumphant and unmolested ; the militia, harassed with repeated calls, had, in some instances refused to march until the Convention ordered the recusants to be fired upon, and serious apprehensions were entertained that the interior of the state would soon be lighted up with the fires of the savages, who were moving from their coverts.

These appalling circumstances rendered the committee of the Convention exceedingly anxious for intelligence as to the designs of the enemy ; and an active correspondence

was kept up with Colonel Hamilton. The following letter in reply to one from Robert R. Livingston, since so distinguished in the history of his country, in behalf of that body, mentioning the arrival of a vessel with arms from France, and their having authorized a draught of militia to meet an apprehended descent of the enemy high on the banks of the Hudson, to destroy the boats provided for the army, will indicate the appearances at this time.

HAMILTON TO A COMMITTEE OF THE PROVINCIAL
CONGRESS.

Head Quarters, Morristown, April 5th, 1777.

GENTLEMEN :

Since my last I have had the pleasure of receiving your reply to my two favours of 29th ultimo and 2d current. I am happy enough to be able to inform you, that my indisposition, which was the occasion of my brevity when I last wrote, is now removed.

The opinion I advanced respecting the enemy's not moving before the beginning of May, seems to be shaken, though not entirely overthrown, by some present appearances. We have received information, that they are embarking about three thousand men on board of transports, which are lying at the Hook, by way of Staten Island. This, it is conjectured, is with a view to the Delaware ; and the supposition is confirmed, by the circumstance of a confederacy lately detected at Philadelphia, who, among other things, were endeavouring, by the temptation of fifty pounds, to engage persons as pilots up that river. The extreme difficulties they must labour under for want of forage, and the infinite hazard they must run by moving with a small body of about five thousand men, with an enemy in the rear, incapable of sparing any considerable body of troops to form a post behind, and be an asylum to them in case of accident, — these circumstances will hardly allow me to think they will be

daring enough to make the attempt at this time. But on the other hand, as they know we are in a progressive state as to numbers, and other matters of importance, and as they have no prospect of early reinforcement, and are in a state of uncertainty as to any, from the bustling aspect of European affairs, it is probable they may conceive a necessity of making a push at all risks. Perhaps, however, this embarkation is intended for some other purpose ; to make a diversion, or execute some partizan exploit elsewhere. On the whole, I find it difficult to believe they are yet ready for any capital operation.

As to your apprehensions of an attempt up the North river, I imagine you may discard any uneasiness on that score, although it will be at all times advisable to be on the watch against such a contingency, it is almost reduced to a certainty, that the principal views of the enemy in the ensuing campaign will be directed towards the southward, and to Philadelphia more immediately ; of which idea, the discovery before mentioned, with respect to pilots, is no inconsiderable confirmation. Philadelphia is an object calculated to strike and attract their attention. It has all along been the main source of supplies towards the war, and the getting it into their possession would deprive us of a wheel we could very badly spare, in the great political and military machine. They are sensible of this, and are equally sensible, that it contains in itself, and is surrounded by a prodigious number of persons attached to them, and inimical to us, who would lend them all the assistance they could in the further prosecution of their designs. It is also a common and well-grounded rule in war, to strike first and principally at the capital towns and cities, in order to the conquest of a country.

I must confess I do not see any object equally interesting to draw their efforts to the northward. Operations merely for plundering and devastation can never answer their end ;

and if they could, one part of the continent would do nearly as well as another. And as to the notion of forming a junction with the northern army, and cutting off the communication between the northern and southern states, I apprehend it will do better in speculation than in practice. Unless the geography of the country is far different from any thing I can conceive, to effect this would require a chain of posts, and such a number of men at each, as would never be practicable or maintainable, but to an immense army. In their progress, by hanging upon their rear, and seizing every opportunity of skirmishing, their situation might be rendered insupportably uneasy.

But for fear of mistake, the general has determined to collect a considerable body of troops at or about Peekskill, which will not be drawn off till the intentions of the enemy have acquired a decisive complexion. These will be ready, according to conjunctures, either to proceed northerly or southerly, as may be requisite. Every precaution should be taken to prevent the boats from being destroyed, by collecting them at the first movement of the enemy under cover of one of the forts, or into some inlet, difficult of access and easily defensible with a small number of men. The loss of them would be an irreparable disadvantage.

The enemy's attempt upon Peekskill is a demonstration of the folly of having any quantity of stores at places so near the water, and so much exposed to a sudden inroad. There should never be more there than sufficient to answer present demands. We have lost a good deal in this way at different times, and I hope experience will at last make us wiser.

His excellency lately had a visit from the Oneida chief and five others. He managed them with a good deal of address, and sent them away perfectly satisfied. He persuaded them to go to Philadelphia, but they declined it, alleging their impatience to return, and remove the errone-

ous opinions of their countrymen, from the misrepresentations of British emissaries, which they were apprehensive might draw them into some rash proceedings. They parted, after having made the most solemn protestations of friendship and good will. His excellency has been very busy all day in despatching the southern post, which has prevented me giving him your resolve. It will, no doubt, be very acceptable ; and it is with pleasure I inform you, that the zeal and abilities of the New-York convention hold the first rank in his estimation.

No news from France, save that the congress have obtained a credit there, for which they can draw bills to the amount of £100,000 sterling. This will be extremely serviceable in carrying on a trade with the French. The new troops begin to come in. If we can shortly get any considerable accession of strength, we may be able to strike some brilliant stroke.

I am, Gentlemen, with the greatest respect,

Your most obedient servant,

A. HAMILTON.

P. S. We have been some time endeavouring to negotiate a regular cartel ; but it has been lately broken off principally on account of Major General Lee. General Howe will not allow him to be comprehended under the general idea of American prisoners.

On the 17th of the same month, he again wrote to the committee, giving a particular account of the attack of the enemy on the American troops commanded by General Lincoln, at Boundbrook, and informing them that three of the enemy's vessels had entered the Delaware, and that a vessel from France had been attacked in the river, and, to prevent her falling into their hands, was blown up.

To aid in counteracting any sudden movement of the enemy, Washington extended his army from Morristown

to the high ground of Middlebrook, a strong position within a few miles of New-Brunswick, where the English had collected their principal stores, which enabled him, at the same time, to keep up his communication with Philadelphia, which he was confirmed in his belief was the enemy's ultimate destination.

The state of the public mind in that city, at this expected invasion, is strongly shown in the following letter from Mr. Duer, a very able and eloquent delegate in congress from New-York, whose conduct from the commencement of the revolution had been marked with boldness and intelligence.

WILLIAM DUER TO ABRAHAM TEN BROECK.

Philadelphia, April 17, 1777.

“I am extremely sorry to inform you, that notwithstanding the invasion which threatens this city, a languor prevails amongst the inhabitants of almost all ranks. The disputes about their constitution, and a want of vigilance and vigour in detecting and defeating the designs of the disaffected, have given the malignants a dangerous ascendancy. The depreciation of the continental money is astonishingly rapid, and I see, with concern, that no attempts are made to check so fatal a measure. You will see by the enclosed resolutions of congress of the 14th and 15th of April, that they have been *under the necessity of supplying an executive authority in this state.*

“By the recess of the Supreme Executive Council, there was an absolute interregnum, and *if congress had not interposed*, this state would have fallen an easy prey to a very small body of the enemy's army. — Only six hundred and eighty-five men at Ticonderoga fit for duty, including one hundred and twenty artificers. — I have the pleasure to assure the convention, that the state of New-York stands in a very high point of light in the eyes of the continent, and

that General Washington, in his public letters to congress, gives the most honourable testimonials in its favour. These, sir, are the happy effects of our unanimity and vigour."

It is also stated, "the disputes in Pennsylvania grew out of no want of attachment to the cause, but from disputes about the constitution. I wish the establishment of new forms of government had been deferred. The union, vigour, and security derived from conventions and committees, are not to be found in any state under its new constitution."

The severe campaign of the preceding year, though one of continued successes until the affair of Trenton, had been productive of little service to the British cause, excepting the capture of New-York: for the enemy could boast nothing more than the ground which their armies occupied. Sir William Howe now judged that the honour of the British arms required some new enterprise worthy of the force under his command.

None seemed more imposing than that of Philadelphia. It was regarded as the capital of the country. It was the seat of government of Pennsylvania, and the most important city of the colonies; and although, as a military post, its possession would yield few advantages, its occupation by an enemy would weaken the cause of America in Europe, strengthen the hands of the British ministry, and produce, he hoped, such a depressing effect on the minds of the Americans, as might predispose them to yield more readily to conciliatory propositions. Having in vain essayed every art to bring on a general engagement, and not daring to venture on the bold experiment of crossing the Delaware with an enemy in his rear, the English general decided upon a new plan of operations. His whole force now exceeded forty thousand men; from these, leaving a sufficient strength to protect New-York, he selected eighteen thousand of his choicest soldiers, and about the middle of July embarked at

Amboy. During this interval of inactivity, the attention of the Americans was principally directed to the operations on the northern frontier; and the advance of one army towards Albany, and the embarkation, at the same time, of another for an apparently remote expedition, baffled speculation. The following letter from Colonel Hamilton, to a friend, written at this time, marks the state of opinion.

Head Quarters, Smith's Clove, July 22d, 1777.

Your favour of the eighteenth, from Saratoga, reached me yesterday.....Your pronouncing Fort Edward among the other forts, indefensible, surprises me a little, as it is entirely contrary to the representations of several gentlemen of judgment, who have had an opportunity of seeing and considering its situation, by whom we have been taught to believe that it would be an excellent post, at least for checking and retarding Burgoyne's progress. I agree with you that our principal strength in the quarter you are, will be in the forests and natural strength of the country, and in the want of forage, provisions, carriages, &c. in which the enemy may easily be thrown, by taking away what there are of those articles which you observe have never been in great abundance.

I am doubtful whether Burgoyne will attempt to penetrate far, and whether he will not content himself with harassing our back settlements by parties, assisted by the savages, who, it is to be feared, will pretty generally be tempted by the enemy's late successes, to confederate in hostilities against us.

This doubt arises from some appearances that indicate a southern movement of General Howe's army, which if it should really happen, will certainly be a barrier against any further impressions of Burgoyne; for it cannot be supposed he would be rash enough to plunge into the bosom of the country without an expectation of being met by Ge-

neral Howe. Things must prove very adverse to us indeed, should he make such an attempt and *not be ruined by it*. I confess, however, that the appearances I allude to do not carry a full evidence in my mind; because they are opposed by others of a contradictory kind, and because I cannot conceive upon what principle of common sense or military propriety Howe can be running away from Burgoyne to the southward.

It is much to be wished he may, even though it should give him the possession of Philadelphia, which, by our remoteness from it may very well happen. In this case we may not only, if we think proper, retaliate, by aiming a stroke at New-York; but we may come upon him with the greatest part of our collective force, to act against that part which is under him. We shall then be certain that Burgoyne cannot proceed, and that a small force of continental troops will be sufficient for that partizan war which he must carry on the rest of the campaign.

A small force will also be sufficient to garrison the posts in the Highlands, and prevent any danger there; so that we shall be able to bring nearly the whole of the continental army against Mr. Howe. The advantages of this are obvious. Should he be satisfied with the splendour of his acquisition, and shut himself up in Philadelphia, we can ruin him by confinement. Should he leave a garrison there, and go forward, we can either fall upon that or his main body, diminished as it will be by such a measure, with our whole force.....There will, however, be many disagreeable consequences attending such an event; amongst which, the foremost is, the *depreciation of our currency*, which, from the importance in which Philadelphia is held, cannot fail to ensue.

I am, dear sir,

Your most obedient servant,

ALEX. HAMILTON.

A fragment of a letter written by him about this time to his venerable friend Doctor Knox, who warmly espoused the American cause, will be read with interest, as exhibiting more at large the prospects and views of policy which he entertained.

“This event [the evacuation of Ticonderoga*] redounds very little to our credit. For, if the post was untenable, or required a larger number of troops to defend it than could be spared for the purpose, it ought long ago to have been foreseen and given up. Instead of that, we have kept a large quantity of cannon in it, and have been heaping up very valuable magazines of stores and provisions, that in the critical moment of defence are abandoned and lost. This affair will be attended with several evil consequences ; for, besides the loss of our stores, which we cannot well afford, it opens a new and easy door by which to penetrate the northern states. It will fix the hitherto fluctuating disposition of the Indians in that quarter, in their favour, and expose the frontiers of the adjacent country to their depredations. But, though it is a misfortune we have reason to lament, I dare say it will be regarded with you as much more important than it really is, and as materially endangering the success of our cause, which is by no means the case. Our opposition is at this time too well matured, and has too great stability to be shaken by an accident of that kind. While we have a respectable army in the field, and resources to feed, clothe, and arm them, we are safe..... We have had a force sufficient for the foregoing part of the campaign, to maintain such a superiority over the main army of the enemy as effectually to hinder them from attaining any of their purposes. And, to the northward, with the reinforcements sent up to succour the retreating garrison of Ticonderoga, and the militia flocking in from New-England, I think there is little doubt we have by this time a force adequate to give

* July 5th, 1777.

Mr. Burgoyne a seasonable check. One good effect will result from the misfortune, which is, that it will stimulate the eastern states to greater exertions than they might otherwise make.

“By our last advices, the enemy were in possession of all the country between Ticonderoga and Fort George, and our army, nearly equal in number to them, were about to take post somewhere between Fort Edward and Saratoga.

“The consequences of this northern affair will depend much upon the part that Howe acts. If he were to co-operate with Burgoyne, it would demand our utmost efforts to counteract them. But, if he should go towards the southward, all, or most of the advantages of Burgoyne’s success will be lost. He will either be obliged to content himself with the possession of Ticonderoga, and the dependent fortresses, and with carrying on a partizan war the rest of the campaign, or he must precipitate himself into certain ruin by attempting to advance in the country with a very incompetent force.

“Appearances lead us to suppose that Howe is fool enough to meditate a southern expedition ; for he has now altered his station at Staten Island, mentioned above, and has fallen down to the Hook. Judging it morally certain that there would be a co-operation of the two armies, we thought it expedient to march northerly, and had accordingly reached within fourteen miles of New-Windsor, the place where we could cross the North river without danger of interruption. But this new movement of the enemy’s fleet has induced us to return a few miles, and make a disposition for marching southerly. We shall, however, be cautious how we proceed on that course, lest nothing more than a feint is intended to divert us from the real object.

“If they go to the southward in earnest, they must have the capture of Philadelphia in view, for there is no other sufficient inducement. We shall endeavour to get there in

time to oppose them, and shall have the principal part of the continental force, and a large body of spirited militia, many of them from their services during the last campaign pretty well inured to arms to make the opposition with. Yet I would not have you to be much surprised if Philadelphia should fall ; for the enemy will doubtless go there with a determination to succeed at all hazard, and we shall not be able to prevent them without risking a general action, the expediency of which will depend upon circumstances. If the militia turn out with that zeal we have a right to expect from their conduct when the enemy made their last experiment in the Jerseys, and were supposed to be going to Philadelphia, we may do it without much inconvenience. If they fall materially short of it, we shall be obliged to confine ourselves to a skirmishing opposition, which we cannot expect will be effectual. It may be asked, if to avoid a general engagement we give up objects of the first importance, what is to hinder the enemy from carrying every important point, and ruining us ? My answer is, that our hopes are not placed in any particular city or spot of ground, but in the preserving a good army, furnished with proper necessities to take advantage of favourable opportunities, and waste and defeat the enemy by piecemeal. Every new post they take requires a new division of their forces, and enables us to strike with our united force against a part of theirs ; and such is their present situation, that another Trenton affair will amount to a complete victory on our part, for they are at too low an ebb to bear another stroke of the kind. Perhaps before I may have an opportunity of ending this, facts will unfold what I am now endeavouring to anticipate by conjecture.

“ You will expect some animadversions on the temper and views of the French nation. I presume you are nearly as well acquainted with the assistance they are giving us, as

I am, both by their intrigues in foreign courts, and by supplies of every kind of warlike stores and apparatus.

“It does not admit of a doubt that they are interested to wish us success; and their conduct plainly shows they are willing to give us every aid essential to our preservation. But it is natural they should desire to do it with as much convenience to themselves as they can. I apprehend they are not overfond of plunging themselves into a war with England if they can avoid it, and still answer the end they have to pursue; and, indeed, from the evident reluctance shown on the part of the latter to do any thing that may bring about such an event, it becomes extremely difficult to draw her into it. The conclusion we may make is, that France will not wish to force England into a war, unless she finds our affairs require it absolutely: and England will not enter into one till she is compelled to do it.

“My best respects to all friends; and I beg you will believe me to be with unabated regard,

“Dear sir,

“Your most obedient servant,

“A. HAMILTON.”

From the time which elapsed since the British fleet was seen off the Capes of the Delaware, there was reason to infer that a more remote expedition than Philadelphia was in view, and it became an important question what destination to give to the American forces.

Two projects promised great advantages:—either an attack upon New-York, or a rapid movement on the Hudson, to check the advance of Burgoyne. The importance of this step, induced Washington to call a council of war, who unanimously concurred in advising the latter object; and on the twenty-first of August, Hamilton was despatched to congress, to confer with that body, and communicate

their sentiments to the commander-in-chief; the result of which interview was anticipated in the preceding letter.

Intelligence of the enemy's fleet near the Capes of Virginia, determined the question. Washington immediately pushed forward to Pennsylvania, and crossing the Delaware, established himself on the Forks of the Brandywine, to retard their progress to Philadelphia, the chief object of all Howe's movements.

The battle which ensued, owing to a successful feint of the British, and a judicious movement of Cornwallis, was little creditable to the American arms; but it was a contest between new raised levies, concentrated for a moment, and then ready to disperse, intimidated by crowds of fugitives, who, with imaginations filled with the recitals of the cruelties which had been suffered in New-Jersey, deserted their homes, and were seen flying in every direction, spreading a panic throughout the adjacent country, and a disciplined body of fifteen thousand veterans, armed at all points, and confident of victory, and yet it was an action in the open field, and by no means decisive.

The supineness of the British commander, who never knew how to use a victory, again permitted the Americans to make good their retreat. They retired to Chester, whence crossing the Schuylkill, they moved on to Swedes Ford, within sixteen miles of Philadelphia, where they recrossed the river, and came into a position for a second engagement. There, as the van of the armies met, a violent storm arose and dispersed the combatants. As Howe was about to cross the Schuylkill on his march to Philadelphia, an incident occurred full of imminent peril to the subject of this memoir. Directly in the route of the British, at a short distance in their advance, a quantity of flour had been stored, which it was thought important to destroy; for this perilous service Colonel Hamilton went forward, attended by Captain Lee, (an officer already eminently distinguish-

ed for his gallantry and enterprise,) with a small party of horse. The approach to the mills was by a road descending a long hill to a bridge over the Schuylkill. On the summit of this hill two videttes were posted, to give intelligence of the enemy's advance. Soon after the party reached the mills, Hamilton secured a flat bottomed boat, by which he could effect his escape should the enemy overtake them;—a few moments showed the necessity of this precaution. While thus occupied, the videttes gave the alarm; four of the dragoons, with Hamilton, jumped into the boat, and the enemy's horse came clattering down the hill, just in the rear of the flying videttes. Lee, hoping to regain the bridge, trusted to his horse. This diverted the pursuing party for a moment, and Hamilton, struggling against the furious current of the river, swoln by the recent tempest, gained the shore in safety, though volleys, which were returned at intervals, were poured into the boat, by which three of the party were wounded. Lee, equally fortunate, owed his escape to the fleetness of his horse.

The British continued to advance towards the capital, which it was impossible to save. During their slow progress, Hamilton was despatched to Philadelphia by Washington; on his approach to which, as appears from the following letter, he was a second time exposed to a surprise.

TO THE HONOURABLE JOHN HANCOCK, PRESIDENT
OF CONGRESS.

September 18th, 1777, 9 o'clock at night.

SIR,

I did myself the honour to write you a hasty line this evening, giving it as my opinion that the city was no longer a place of safety for you. I write you again lest that letter should not get to hand. The enemy are on the road to Swedes Ford, the main body about four miles from it. They sent a party this evening to Daviser's ferry, which fired upon me and

some others in crossing it, killed one man, wounded another, and disabled my horse.

They came on so suddenly, that one boat was left adrift on the other side, which will of course fall into their hands, and by the help of that, they will get possession of another, which was abandoned by those who had the direction of it, and left afloat, in spite of every thing that I could do to the contrary. These two boats will convey fifty men across at a time, so that in a few hours they may throw over a large party, perhaps sufficient to overmatch the militia who may be between them and the city. This renders the situation of congress extremely precarious, if they are not on their guard : my apprehensions for them are great, though it is not improbable they may not be realized.

The most cogent reasons oblige me to join the army this night, or I should have waited upon you myself. I am in hopes our army will be up with the enemy before they pass Schuylkill ; if they are, something serious will ensue.

I have the honour to be,

With much respect,

Sir, your most obedient,

A. HAMILTON.

Soon after his return to camp, he was again directed to return to Philadelphia, to concert future measures with some of the members of congress, to execute the unpleasant task of impressing the property of the citizens, and to superintend the collection of stores, and its embarkation in the shipping.

This duty was performed in a manner highly satisfactory to the commander-in-chief, in whose name Colonel Hamilton addressed a letter to the ladies of that city, enforcing upon them the claims of their country, of which he spoke as the most successful of his youthful productions.

On his arrival at Philadelphia, he addressed a letter, dated the 22d September, to the President of Congress, stating, —

“I left camp last evening, and came to this city to superintend the collection of blankets and clothing for the army. Mr. Lovell sends to inform me there is an express going off to congress, and I do myself the honour to communicate a brief state of things when I left camp. The enemy moved yesterday from where they lay opposite to Valley Forge, &c. higher up the river, on their old scheme of gaining our right. I don't know precisely where they halted, but our army was preparing to move up also to counteract them.

“I am this morning told they marched about twelve o'clock at night for that purpose. The general opinion was, that the enemy would attempt crossing this day, — every appearance justified the supposition.

“We had intelligence that the enemy had the night before last surprised Generals Smallwood and Wayne, and consequently dispersed them, after a small opposition. The loss, it is said, was not great, and our troops were re-assembling fast at the Red Lion. This seems to have been a bad look out, and is somewhat disconcerting.

“By a letter from General McDougal, received this morning, it appears he was on the 20th, in the morning, at Second river, just setting out on his march towards Woodbridge. He is pressing forward with all possible expedition. The troops were pretty well refreshed, and in good spirits.”

Finding all resistance vain, the Americans took post sixteen miles from Philadelphia, in a strong situation, on the eastern side of the Schuylkill, covered by a stream known as the Skippach creek.

Sir William Howe meanwhile crossed that river with his army, and having ordered Cornwallis to take possession of the city, encamped at Germantown.

Each position was taken with reference to the fortifications which had been erected on the Delaware, with immense labour, under the eye of Du Portail, who was soon after appointed a general of brigade.

Howe, considering the removal of these obstructions essential to his security, weakened his army by detachments for that purpose. Washington, strengthened by a reinforcement from Maryland, and by McDougal's brigade from New-York, regarded this as a favourable moment to surprise the enemy. The battle of Germantown ensued. The surprise was less complete than had been hoped, and after a vigorous onset, in which the divisions under Wayne and Sullivan displayed the greatest gallantry, the Americans were compelled to retreat. The object was not, however, wholly unattained. The army had felt the importance of an action; an impression was made on their adversary, that even in a close engagement, without the advantage of ground, the gallantry and discipline of this inferior force was a just object of vigilance. The common sentiment of the country called for the attempt, and such was its influence on the mind of General Howe, that within two days after the attack, he drew in his lines, and retreating to Philadelphia, permitted the Americans to remain within his reach, without any serious molestation.

CHAPTER VI.

[1777.]

WHILE the main army was thus employed in resisting the attempts on Philadelphia, events of the utmost importance had occurred on the northern frontier. On the day of Hamilton's appointment to the staff, he addressed, in the name of General Washington, an urgent letter to the committee of New-York, incidentally mentioning the difficulty of supplying the troops with arms, from the practice which had prevailed among the militia of taking them with them when their terms of service expired; and endeavouring to impress upon the state the necessity of the most unwearied activity in arming their quotas, he then replies to an application for reinforcements at the north, "that the advanced season of the year renders an attack upon Ticonderoga over the ice not so much to be feared as to induce him to provide against a possible inconvenience there, at the expense of not guarding effectually against a certain one here, wherefore I have determined to send no more battalions to that place, having ordered a sufficient force from the east."

This unavoidable decision of the commander-in-chief, excited the greatest alarm among the inhabitants of New-York, and led them to wait, with the most eager anxiety, the march of the eastern troops.

The hostile feelings which had been nourished among the Dutch population towards their eastern neighbours, were now carried to the highest point.

Engaged in a common conflict, the people of New-York regarded the tardy measures of New-England as proceeding from a fixed determination to surrender them an easy prey to the enemy,—relying on their dense population for their own security, and shunning a warfare so remote, and attended with so many hardships. Hence proceeded the most

gloomy alarms, followed by embittered rancour. In a letter from Governor Clinton, it is stated, "that Connecticut and Massachusetts have not furnished a man for the southern department; nay, scarcely answered the letters sent to them. General Gates is ordered to take the command of the northern army, and General Schuyler to join General Washington. The New-England men will now be gratified, and ought to turn out, but I fear they will not behave better under any command.

"The New-York militia have turned out with the greatest alacrity and spirit, leaving their harvests in the fields."

In a letter from the Albany committee, it is mentioned, "our affairs grow more gloomy every day. The New-England states are still indifferent to all entreaty. All the militia of Albany are sent to the army. The people in Schoharie say they must lay down their arms if Albany falls. Only two hundred savages have driven in the inhabitants within fifty miles. What would be the case if a thousand are let loose? Trumbull writes that no aid is to be expected from Connecticut." In another communication, the delegates from New-York write, "General Gates is far from partial to our state; you cannot be at a loss for the reason. Our revolvers* seem to possess his esteem here, and he has left a most extraordinary recommendation in their favour."

About the same time, the council of Albany prepared a declaration, (stating "the pain it gave them to find that a measure so absurd and probably chimerical as the surrender of Ticonderoga, should be imputed to the directions of General Schuyler" in whose zeal, vigilance, and integrity, they express the highest confidence,) which they addressed to General Putnam, enclosing an extract from a letter of General Schuyler, from Fort Edward, of the ninth of July, expressing his astonishment at the conduct of the officers who had evacuated that post.

* The people of Vermont.

These contemporary monuments of history evince, in a strong light, the alarming condition of affairs in New-York, where the people were unable to stifle their deep-rooted hostility to their New-England neighbours, and where state pride looked with indignation at the decision which had supplanted their most popular chief, who, perhaps, entered too warmly into the local feelings of his state, to make room for an individual, whose capacity was distrusted by men of discernment, and whose title to command was deemed the more invidious, as being founded on his popularity with a community with whom they had long been engaged in territorial disputes.

This scene of discord produced deep dismay at head quarters, where the necessity of silencing all local differences had been among the most important, as it was the most difficult of duties.

While the imminent danger which menaced the army under his immediate command, would seem to have required all his care, Washington failed in none of the great trusts of his high station, but with that presiding superiority and high tone of mind which distinguished him, he is seen stemming the tide of discontent around him, — cheering the faltering spirits of congress, stimulating the then sluggish councils of New-England, and, at the same time, soothing the alarms of the unhappy sufferers of New-York. The following letter, written by Hamilton at his instance, and addressed to the committee of that state, is a highly interesting exhibition of the temper of his patriotic mind.

Head Quarters, Philadelphia, August 4th, 1777.

I have been duly honoured by your several favours of the 25th, 27th, and 30th of July. The misfortune at Ticonderoga, has produced a very disagreeable alteration in our affairs, and has thrown a gloom upon the favourable prospect which the campaign previous to that event afforded. But I am in great hopes, the ill consequences of it will not continue

to operate long, and that the jealousies and alarms which so sudden and unexpected an accident has occasioned in the minds of the people both of your state and to the eastward, will shortly subside, and give way to the more rational dictates of self-preservation and regard to the common good. In fact, the worst effect of that disaster is, that it has served to create those distrusts and apprehensions ; for if the matter were coolly and dispassionately considered, there would be found nothing so formidable in Mr. Burgoyne, and the force under him, with all his successes, as to countenance the least languor or despondency, and experience would show that a tolerable degree of vigour in the states more immediately interested, would be sufficient to check his career, and perhaps convert the advantages he has gained into his ruin. But while people continue to view what has happened through the medium of supineness or fear, there is no saying to what length an enterprising genius may push his good fortune. I have the fullest confidence that no endeavours of the council will be omitted to bring your state (with the distresses of which I am sensibly affected,) to every effort it is capable of making in its present mutilated condition, and they may rely upon it no means in my power will be unemployed to co-operate with them in repelling the danger that threatens the state, and through it the continent. If I do not give as essential aid as might be wished to the northern army, it is not from want of inclination, nor from being too little impressed with the importance of doing it. It would be the height of impolicy to weaken ourselves too much here, in order to increase our strength there, and it must certainly be more difficult, as well as of greater moment, to control the main army of the enemy, than an inferior, and, I may say, dependent one ; for it is pretty obvious, if General Howe can be completely kept at bay, and prevented effecting any capital purposes, the successes of General Burgoyne, whatever they may be, must be partial and temporary,

Nothing that I can do shall be wanting to rouse the eastern states, and excite them to those exertions which the exigency of our affairs so urgently demands. I lament that they have not yet done more, that so few of their militia have come into the field, and that those few have been so precipitate in returning home at this critical period; but I have, nevertheless, great reliance upon those states. I know they are capable of powerful efforts, and that their attachment to the cause, notwithstanding they may be a little tardy, will not allow them long to withhold their aid, at a time when their own safety, and that of a sister state, and, in a great measure, the safety of the continent, calls for their greatest zeal and activity.

I flatter myself the presence of General Arnold and General Lincoln in the Northern Department will have a happy effect upon them. Those gentlemen possess much of their confidence, particularly the latter, than whom there is, perhaps, no man from the state of Massachusetts, who enjoys more universal esteem and popularity. And in addition to that, they are both to be considered as very valuable officers. You intimate a wish that some assistance could be drawn from the southern states at this time. But while things remain in their present posture, and appearances, however illusory they may prove in the issue, afford the strongest reason to keep their force at home, to counteract the seeming intentions of General Howe, I could neither ask nor expect them to detach succours to the northern states, who are so well able to defend themselves against the force they now have to oppose.

I hope an exaggerated idea of the enemy's numbers may have no injurious influence on our measures. There is no circumstance I am acquainted with that induces me to believe General Burgoyne can have more than five or six thousand men; and if the force left in Canada is so considerable as the information you send me makes it, he can-

not have even so many. The representations of prisoners and deserters in this respect are of little validity ; their knowledge is always very limited, and their intentions, particularly the former, very often bad.

Beyond what regards their own companies, little or no attention is due to what they say ; the number of regiments your informant mentions corresponds with other accounts ; but the number of men in each company he gives the establishment, is not, I am persuaded, their actual state. The enemy's army in Canada last campaign, though they suffered little by action, must have decreased materially by sickness and other casualties ; and if the recruits to them, both from England and Germany bore any proportion to those which have reinforced General Howe, the state of their regiments must be greatly inferior to what your information holds forth. * * * * *

The appointment of General Clinton to the government of your state, is an event that, in itself, gives me great pleasure, and very much abates the regret I should otherwise feel for the loss of his services in the military line. That gentleman's character is such, as will make him peculiarly useful at the head of your affairs, in a situation so alarming and interesting as that which you now experience.

These paternal councils had the happiest effect in silencing the jealousies which prevailed at Albany, where the arm of the government was invigorated by the personal energy of Clinton.

Schuyler, by a series of masterly movements, and by interposing innumerable obstacles, delayed the progress of the enemy, weakened by the diversions of Stark at the east, and Willet at the west. The eastern troops, convinced of their common interest in repelling the invasion of that state, poured in to the aid of New-York ; and while the advance of Burgoyne was looked upon with consternation, by

a series of unparalleled sufferings which no energy could surmount, he was gradually broken down, until a brief contest compelled him to surrender at Saratoga ; an event which, maturing the confidence that the battle of Germantown had inspired in the councils of France, confirmed her determination openly to espouse the cause of the United States.

Intelligence of this event reached the head-quarters of Washington at the close of the month of October, a few days after his army had removed to Whitemarsh, and he immediately addressed a letter to Gates, in which, after congratulating him on his success, and expressing his regret "that a matter of such magnitude should have reached him by report only, or through the chance of letters, instead of an authentic communication under his own signature," he says, "Our affairs having terminated to the northward, I have, by the advice of the general officers, sent Colonel Hamilton, one of my aids, to lay before you a full state of our situation, and that of the enemy in this quarter. He is well-informed upon the subject, and will deliver my sentiments upon the plan of operations that is now necessary to be pursued. I think it improper to enter into a detail. From Colonel Hamilton, you will have a clear and comprehensive view of things ; and I persuade myself you will do every thing in your power to facilitate the objects I have in contemplation." On the 30th of October Colonel Hamilton departed under the following instructions :

WASHINGTON TO HAMILTON.

Head Quarters, Philadelphia county, 30th Oct. 1777.

DEAR SIR,

It having been judged expedient by the members of a council of war held yesterday, that one of the gentlemen of my family should be sent to General Gates, in order to lay before him the state of this army and the situation of the ene-

my, and to point out to him the many happy consequences that will accrue from an immediate reinforcement being sent from the northern army, I have thought it proper to appoint you to that duty, and desire that you will immediately set out for Albany, at which place, or in the neighbourhood, I imagine you will find General Gates.

You are so fully acquainted with the principal points on which you are sent, namely, the state of our army and the situation of the enemy, that I shall not enlarge on those heads. What you are chiefly to attend to, is to point out in the clearest and fullest manner to General Gates, the absolute necessity that there is for his detaching a very considerable part of the army at present under his command to the reinforcement of this ; a measure that will in all probability reduce General Howe to the same situation in which General Burgoyne now is, should he attempt to remain in Philadelphia without being able to remove the obstructions in the Delaware, and open a free communication with his shipping. The force which the members of the council of war judge it safe and expedient to draw down at present, are the three New-Hampshire and fifteen Massachusetts regiments, with Lee's and Jackson's two of the sixteen, additional. But it is more than probable that General Gates may have detained part of those troops to the reduction of Ticonderoga, should the enemy not have evacuated it, or to the garrisoning of it. If they should, in that case the reinforcement will be according to circumstances ; but, if possible, let it be made up to the same number out of other corps. If upon your meeting with General Gates, you should find that he intends, in consequence of his success, to employ the troops under his command upon some expedition, by the prosecution of which the common cause will be more benefitted than by their being sent down to reinforce this army, it is not my wish to give any interruption to the plan. But if he should have nothing more in contemplation than those particular objects which I have mentioned

to you, and which it is unnecessary to commit to paper, in that case you are to inform him that it is my desire that the reinforcements before mentioned, or such part of them as can be safely spared, be immediately put in motion to join the army.

I have understood that General Gates has already detached Nixon's and Glover's brigades to join General Putnam, and General Dickinson informs me, Sir Henry Clinton has come down the river with his whole force ; if this be a fact, you are to desire General Putnam to send the two brigades forward with the greatest expedition, as there can be no occasion for them there.

I expect you will meet Colonel Morgan's corps upon their way down ; if you do, let them know how essential their services are to us, and desire the Colonel or commanding officer to hasten their march as much as is consistent with the health of the men after their late fatigues.

G. W.

P. S. I ordered the detachment belonging to General McDougal's division to come forward. If you meet them, direct those belonging to Greene's, Angel's, Chandler's, and Duryee's regiments not to cross Delaware, but to proceed to Red Bank.

Colonel Hamilton proceeded by way of New-Windsor to Fishkill, the head quarters of General Putnam, from whence he addressed the following letter to General Washington, on the second of November.

HAMILTON TO WASHINGTON.

DEAR SIR,

I lodged last night in the neighbourhood of New-Windsor. This morning early I met Colonel Morgan with his corps, about a mile from it, in march for head quarters. I

told him the necessity of making all the despatch he could, so as not to fatigue his men too much, which he has promised to do.

I understood from Colonel Morgan, that all the northern army were marching down on both sides the river, and would, probably, be to-morrow at New-Windsor and this place ; and that General Putnam had held a council for the general disposition of them, in which it was resolved to send you four thousand men, and to keep the rest on this side the river. I came here in expectation that matters were in such a train as to enable me to accomplish my errand without going any farther, unless it should be to hasten the troops that were on their march ; but on my arrival, I learned from Mr. Hughes, an aid-de-camp of General Gates, that the following disposition of the northern army had taken place.

General Patterson's, Glover's, and Nixon's brigades and Colonel Warner's mountain boys to remain in and about Albany, — barracks building for them. General Poor's brigade marching down this side of the river to join General Putnam, will be here probably to-morrow. General Learned's brigade, Morgan's corps, Warner's brigade of Massachusetts militia, and some regiments of New-York militia, on their march on the west side of the river.

I have directed General Putnam, in your name, to send forward with all despatch to join you, the two continental brigades and Warner's militia brigade ; this last is to serve till the latter end of this month. Your instructions did not comprehend any militia, but as there are certain accounts here that most of the troops from New-York are gone to reinforce General Howe, and as so large a proportion of continental troops have been detained at Albany, I concluded you would not disapprove of a measure calculated to strengthen you, though but for a small time, and have ventured to adopt it on that presumption.

Being informed by General Putnam, that General Wynds, with seven hundred Jersey militia was, at King's Ferry, with intention to cross to Peekskill, I prevailed upon him to relinquish that idea, and send off an immediate order for them to march towards Red Bank. It is possible, however, unless your excellency supports this order by an application from yourself, he may march his men home, instead of marching them to the place he has been directed to repair to.

Neither Lee's, Jackson's regiments, nor the detachments belonging to General McDougal's division have yet marched. I have urged their being sent, and an order has been despatched for their instantly proceeding. Colonel Hughes is pressing some fresh horses for me. The moment they are ready, I shall recross the river in order to fall in with the troops on the other side, and make all the haste I can to Albany to get the three brigades there sent forward.

Will your excellency permit me to observe, that I have some doubts, under present circumstances and appearances, of the propriety of leaving the regiments proposed to be left in this quarter? But if my doubts on this subject were stronger than they are, I am forbid, by the sense of council, from interfering in the matter.

General Poor's brigade is just arrived here; they will proceed to join you with all expedition. So strongly am I impressed with the importance of endeavouring to crush Mr. Howe, that I am apt to think it would be advisable to draw off all the continental troops. Had this been determined on, General Warner's sixteen hundred militia might have been left here.

I have the honour to be,

With the warmest esteem and respect,

Your excellency's most obedient servant,

A. HAMILTON.

On Hamilton's arrival at Albany, he had an interview with General Gates, the result of which is stated in the following letter to General Washington.

HAMILTON TO WASHINGTON.

Albany, November, 1777.

DEAR SIR,

I arrived here yesterday at noon, and waited upon General Gates immediately on the business of my mission, but was sorry to find his ideas did not correspond with yours, for drawing off the number of troops you directed. I used every argument in my power to convince him of the propriety of the measure, but he was inflexible in the opinion that two brigades at least of continental troops should remain in and near this place. His reasons were, that the intelligence of Sir Henry Clinton's having gone to join Howe was not sufficiently authenticated to put it out of doubt; that there was, therefore, a possibility of his returning up the river, which might expose the finest arsenal in America (as he calls the one here,) to destruction, should this place be left so bare of troops as I proposed, and that the want of conveniences and the difficulty of the roads would make it impossible to remove artillery and stores for a considerable time; that the New-England states would be left open to the depredations and ravages of the enemy; that it would put it out of his power to enterprize any thing against Ticonderoga, which he thinks might be done in the winter, and which he considers it of importance to undertake.

The force of these reasons did by no means strike me; and I did every thing in my power to show they were unsubstantial; but all I could effect was to have one brigade despatched in addition to those already marched. I found myself infinitely embarrassed, and was at a loss how to act. I felt the importance of strengthening you as much as pos-

sible ; but, on the other hand, I found insuperable inconveniences in acting diametrically opposite to the opinion of a gentleman whose successes have raised him to the highest importance.

General Gates has won the entire confidence of the eastern states. If disposed to do it, by addressing himself to the prejudices of the people, he would find no difficulty to render a measure odious, which it might be said with plausibility enough to be believed, was calculated to expose them to unnecessary dangers, notwithstanding their exertions during the campaign had given them the fullest title to repose and security. General Gates has influence and interest elsewhere ; he might use it, if he pleased, to discredit the measure there also. On the whole, it appeared to me dangerous to insist on sending more troops from hence, while General Gates appeared so warmly opposed to it. Should any accident or inconvenience happen in consequence of it, there would be too fair a pretext for censure, and many people are too well disposed to lay hold of it. At any rate, it might be considered as using him ill, to take a step so contrary to his judgment in a case of this nature. These considerations, and others which I shall be more explicit in when I have the pleasure of seeing you, determined me not to insist upon sending either of the other brigades remaining here. I am afraid what I have done may not meet with your approbation, as not being perhaps fully warranted by your instructions ; but I ventured to do what I thought right, hoping that at least the goodness of my intention will excuse the error of my judgment.

I was induced to this relaxation the more readily, as I had directed to be sent on two thousand militia which were not expected by you, and a thousand continental troops out of those proposed to be left with General Putnam, which I have written to him since I found how matters were circumstanced here, to forward to you with all despatch. I

did this for several reasons :—because your reinforcement would be more expeditious from that place than from this ; because two thousand continental troops at Peekskill will not be wanted in its present circumstances, especially as it was really necessary to have a body of continental troops at this place for the security of the valuable stores here, and I should not, if I had my wish, think it expedient to draw off more than two of the three brigades now here.

This being the case, one of the ends you proposed to be answered, by leaving the ten regiments with General Putnam, will be equally answered by the troops here ; I mean that of covering and fortifying the eastern states, and one thousand continental troops in addition to the militia collected and that may be collected here, will be sufficient in the Highlands for covering the country down that way, and carrying on the works necessary to be raised for the defence of the river.

The troops gone and going to reinforce you are near five thousand rank and file continental troops, and two thousand five hundred Massachusetts and New-Hampshire militia. These, and the seven hundred Jersey militia, will be a larger reinforcement than you expected, though not quite an equal number of continental troops, nor exactly in the way directed. General Lincoln tells me the militia are very excellent, and though their times will be out by the last of this month, you will be able, if you think proper, to order the troops still remaining here, to join you by the time their term of service expires.

I cannot forbear being uneasy lest my conduct should prove displeasing to you, but I have done what, considering all circumstances, appeared to me most eligible and prudent. Vessels are preparing to carry the brigade to New-Windsor, which will embark this evening. I shall, this afternoon, set out on my return to camp, and on my way shall endeavour to hasten the troops forward.

Disappointed in the orders issued by General Gates, Hamilton, in pursuance of the requisition of the commander-in-chief, addressed him on the 5th November, prior to his departure from Albany, in the following decisive tone.

COLONEL HAMILTON TO GENERAL GATES.

Albany, November 5, 1777.

SIR,

By inquiry, I have learned that General Patterson's brigade, which is the one you propose to send, is by far the weakest of the three now here, and does not consist of more than about six hundred rank and file fit for duty. It is true, that there is a militia regiment with it of about two hundred, but the time of service for which this regiment is engaged is so near expiring, that it would be past by the time the men could arrive at their destination.

Under these circumstances, I cannot consider it either as compatible with the good of the service, or my instructions from his excellency General Washington, to consent that that brigade be selected from the three to go to him, but I am under the necessity of desiring, by virtue of my orders from him, that one of the others be substituted instead of this, either General Nixon's or General Glover's, and that you will be pleased to give immediate orders for its embarkation.

Knowing that General Washington wished me to pay the greatest deference to your judgment, I ventured so far to deviate from the instructions he gave me, as to consent, in compliance with your opinion, that two brigades should remain here instead of one. At the same time, permit me to observe, that I am not myself sensible of the expediency of keeping more than one, with the detached regiments in the neighbourhood of this place, and that my ideas coincide with those gentlemen whom I have consulted on the occasion, whose judgment I have much more reliance upon than

on my own, and who must be supposed to have a thorough knowledge of all the circumstances. Their opinion is, that one brigade and the regiments before mentioned would amply answer the purposes of this post. When I preferred your opinion to other considerations, I did not imagine you would pitch upon a brigade little more than half as large as the others, and finding this to be the case, I indispensably owe it to my duty to desire, in his excellency's name, that another may go instead of the one intended, and without loss of time. As it may be conducive to despatch to send Glover's brigade, if agreeable to you, you will give orders accordingly.

On the receipt of this letter, General Gates gave the order, and soon after wrote to General Washington, stating as his reason for not having readily complied with the request made to him, an apprehension that the forces at Peekskill could not prevent the enemy from destroying the city of Albany and the arsenal, and that he was entirely averse from sending more than one brigade, lest every good effect of the ruin of Burgoyne's army should be totally lost by the possession of that town.

Colonel Hamilton having concluded his mission to General Gates, returned to New-Windsor, whence, on the 10th November, he addressed the commander-in-chief to this effect.

HAMILTON TO WASHINGTON.

DEAR SIR,

I arrived here last night from Albany. Having given General Gates a little time to recollect himself, I renewed my remonstrance on the necessity and propriety of sending you more than one brigade of the three he had detained with him, and finally prevailed upon him to give orders

for Glover's in addition to Patterson's brigade to march this way.

As it was thought conducive to expedition to send the troops by water as far as it could be done, I procured all the vessels that could be had at Albany fit for the purpose, but could not get more than sufficient to take Patterson's brigade. It was embarked the 7th instant, but the wind has been contrary; they must probably be here to-day. General Glover's brigade marched at the same time, on the east side of the river, the roads being much better than on this side. I am this moment informed, that one sloop with a part of Patterson's has arrived, and that the others are in sight. They will immediately proceed by water to King's Ferry, and thence take the shortest route.

I am pained beyond expression to inform your excellency that on my arrival here, I find every thing has been neglected and deranged by General Putnam, and that the two brigades, Poor's and Learned's, still remain here and on the other side of the river at Fishkill. Colonel Warner's militia, I am told, have been drawn to Peekskill, to aid in an expedition against New-York, which it seems is, at this time, the hobby-horse with General Putnam. Not the least attention has been paid to my order in your name for a detachment of one thousand men from the troops hitherto stationed at this post. Every thing is sacrificed to the whim of taking New-York.

The two brigades of Poor and Learned, it appears, would not march for want of money and necessaries; several of the regiments having received no pay for six or eight months past. There has been a high mutiny among the former on this account, in which a captain killed a man, and was himself shot by his comrade. These difficulties, for want of proper management, have stopped the troops from proceeding. Governor Clinton has been the only man who has done any thing towards removing them, but

for want of General Putnam's co-operation, has not been able to effect it. He has only been able to prevail with Learned's brigade to agree to march to Goshen, in hopes by getting them once on the go, to induce them to continue their march. On coming here, I immediately sent for Colonel Bailey, who now commands Learned's brigade, and persuaded him to engage to carry the brigade on to headquarters as fast as possible. This he expects to effect by means of five or six thousand dollars, which Governor Clinton was kind enough to borrow for me, and which Colonel Bailey thinks will keep the men in good humour till they join you. They marched this morning towards Goshen.

I shall, as soon as possible, see General Poor, and do every thing in my power to get him along, and hope I shall be able to succeed.

The plan I before laid having been totally deranged, a new one has become necessary. It is now too late to send Warner's militia; by the time they reached you, their term of service would be out. The motive for sending them, which was to give you a speedy reinforcement has, by the past delay, been superseded.

By Governor Clinton's advice, I have sent an order in the most emphatical terms to General Putnam, immediately to despatch all the continental troops under him to your assistance, and to detain the militia instead of them.

My opinion is, that the only present use for troops in this quarter is, to protect the country from the depredations of little plundering parties, and for carrying on the works necessary for the defence of the river. Nothing more ought to be thought of. 'Tis only wasting time and misapplying men to employ them in a suicidal parade against New-York, — for in this it will undoubtedly terminate. New-York is no object, if it could be taken, and to take it would require more men than could be spared from more substantial purposes. Governor Clinton's ideas coincide with mine.

He thinks that there is no need of more continental troops here than a few to give a spur to the militia in working upon the fortifications. In pursuance of this, I have given the directions before mentioned. If General Putnam attends to them, the troops under him may be with you nearly as early as any of the others, (though he has unluckily marched them down to Tarrytown,) and General Glover's brigade, when it gets up, will be more than sufficient to answer the true end of this post.

If your excellency agrees with me in opinion, it will be well to send instant directions to General Putnam to pursue the object I have mentioned, for I doubt whether he will attend to any thing I shall say, notwithstanding it comes in the shape of a positive order. I fear unless you interpose, the works here will go on so feebly for want of men, that they will not be completed in time ; whereas, it appears to me of the greatest importance they should be pushed with the utmost vigour. Governor Clinton will do every thing in his power. I wish General Putnam was recalled from the command of this post, and Governor Clinton would accept it : — the blunders and caprices of the former are endless. Believe me, sir, no body can be more impressed with the importance of forwarding the reinforcements coming to you with all speed, nor could any body have endeavoured to promote it more than I have done ; but the *ignorance* of some, and the *design* of others, have been almost insuperable obstacles. I am very unwell, but I shall not spare myself to get things immediately in a proper train, and for that purpose intend, unless I receive other orders from you, to continue with the troops in the progress of their march. As soon as I get General Poor's brigade in march, I shall proceed to General Putnam's at Peekskill.

On the twelfth of November, he addressed another letter to General Washington, in which he says, "I have been

detained here these two days by a fever and violent rheumatic pains throughout my body. This has prevented my being active in person for promoting the purposes of my errand, but I have taken every other method in my power, in which Governor Clinton has obligingly given me all the aid he could. In answer to my pressing application to General Poor for the immediate marching of his brigade, I was told they were under an operation for the itch, which made it impossible for them to proceed, till the effects of it were over. By a letter, however, of yesterday, General Poor* informs me he would certainly march this morning. I must do him the justice to say, he appears solicitous to join you, and that I believe the past delay is not owing to any fault of his, but is wholly chargeable on General Putnam. Indeed, sir, I owe it to the service to say, that every part of this gentleman's conduct is marked with blunder and negligence, and gives general disgust.

“Parson's brigade will join you, I hope, in five or six days from this ; Learned's brigade may do the same ; Poor's will, I am persuaded, make all the haste they can for the future, and Glover's may be expected at Fishkill to-night, whence they will be pushed forward as fast as I can have any influence to make them go ; but I am sorry to say, the disposition for marching in the officers and men does not keep pace with my wishes or the exigency of the occasion. They have unfortunately imbibed an idea that they have done their part of the business of the campaign, and are now entitled to repose. This, and the want of pay, makes them averse to a long march at this advanced season.

“* * * * In a letter from General Putnam, just now received by Governor Clinton, he appears to have been the 10th instant at King's Street, at the White Plains. I have had no

* This gentleman died 9th September, 1780. Washington says of him, — “an officer of distinguished merit, who, as a citizen and a soldier, had every claim to the esteem of his country.”

answer to my last applications. The enemy appear to have stripped New-York very bare. The people there, that is the tories, are in a great fright: this adds to my anxiety that the reinforcements from this quarter to you are not in greater forwardness and more considerable.

“I have written to General Gates, informing him of the accounts of the situation of New-York with respect to troops, and the probability of the force gone to Howe being greater than was at first expected, to try if this will not *extort* from him a farther reinforcement. I don’t, however, expect much from him, as he pretends to have in view an expedition against Ticonderoga, to be undertaken in the winter, and he knows that under the sanction of this idea, calculated to catch the eastern people, he may, without censure, retain the troops; and as I shall be under the necessity of speaking plainly to you when I have the pleasure of seeing you, I shall not hesitate to say, I doubt whether you would have had a man from the northern army if the whole could have been kept at Albany with any decency. Perhaps you will think me blameable in not having exercised the powers you gave me, and given a positive order. Perhaps I have been so; but deliberately weighing all circumstances, I did not, and do not think it advisable to do it.”

Hamilton then crossed the river to Fishkill, in order to have another interview with General Putnam, whence he wrote a second letter to General Gates.

HAMILTON TO GATES.

November 12th, 1777.

SIR,

Ever since my arrival in this quarter, I have been endeavouring to collect the best idea I could of the state of things in New-York, in order the better to form a judgment of the probable reinforcement gone to General Howe. On the whole, this is a fact well ascertained, that New-York has been strip-

ped as bare as possible ; that in consequence of this, the few troops there and the inhabitants are under so strong apprehensions of an attack, as almost to amount to a panic ; that to supply the deficiency of men, every effort is making to excite the citizens to arms for the defence of the city. For this purpose, the public papers are full of addresses to them, that plainly speak the apprehensions prevailing on the occasion.

Hence I infer that a formidable force is gone to General Howe. The calculations made by those who have had the best opportunities of judging, carry the number from six to seven thousand. If so, the number gone and going to General Washington is far inferior, — five thousand at the utmost. The militia were all detained by General Putnam, till it became too late to send them.

The state of things I gave you when I had the pleasure of seeing you, was, to the best of my judgment, sacredly true. I give you the present information, that you may decide whether any farther succour can with propriety come from you.

The fleet, with the troops on board, sailed out of the Hook the 5th instant. This circumstance demonstrates, beyond a possibility of doubt, that it is General Howe's fixed intention to endeavour to hold Philadelphia at all hazards, and removes all danger of any farther operations up the North river this winter ; otherwise Sir Henry Clinton's movement at this advanced season is altogether inexplicable.

If you can with propriety afford any farther assistance, the most expeditious mode of conveying it, will be to acquaint General Putnam of it, that he may send on the troops with him, to be replaced by them. You, sir, best know the uses to which the troops with you are to be applied, and will determine accordingly. I am certain it is not his excellency's wish to frustrate any plan you may have in view for the benefit of the service, so far as it can possibly be avoided, consistent with a due attention to more important objects.

I am, with respect, sir, your most obedient,

ALEX. HAMILTON, A. D. C.

He proceeded through the Highlands to Peekskill, where becoming seriously indisposed, he addressed a letter to General Washington, dated November 15, Mr. Kennedy's House.

HAMILTON TO WASHINGTON.

I arrived at this place last night, and unfortunately find myself unable to proceed any farther. Imagining I had gotten the better of my complaint which confined me at Governor Clinton's, and anxious to be about attending to the march of the troops, the day before yesterday I crossed the ferry in order to fall in with General Glover's brigade, which was on its march from Poughkeepsie to Fishkill. I did not, however, see it myself, but received a letter from Colonel Shepherd, who commands the brigade, informing me he would be last night at Fishkill, and this night at King's Ferry. Wagons, &c. are provided on the other side for his accommodation, so that there need be no delay but what is voluntary; and I believe Colonel Shepherd is as well disposed as could be wished to hasten his march. General Poor's brigade crossed the ferry the day before yesterday. Two York regiments, Cortland's and Livingston's, are with them: they were unwilling to be separated from the brigade, and the brigade from them. General Putnam was unwilling to keep them with him, and if he had consented to do it, the regiments to replace them would not join you six days as soon as these. The troops now remaining with General Putnam, will amount to about the number you intended, though they are not exactly the same. He has detached Colonel Charles Webb's regiment to you. He *says* the troops with him are not in a condition to march, being destitute of shoes, stockings, and other necessities; but I believe the true reasons of his being unwilling to pursue the mode pointed out by you, were his aversion to the York troops, and his desire to retain General Parsons with him. I am, with much respect and esteem,

Your excellency's most obedient servant,

A. HAMILTON.

His delicate frame, exhausted by his exertions, sunk under the fatigue, and he was prevented by indisposition from re-joining the army until a short time before it entered into winter quarters at Valley Forge. While anxiously waiting his recovery, in the expectation of participating in the decisive blow which he still cherished the hope might be given to the enemy, he had the gratification of receiving a letter from General Washington, dated November 15, 1777.

DEAR SIR,

I have duly received your several favours from the time you left me to that of the 12th instant. I approve entirely of all the steps you have taken, and have only to wish that the exertions of those you have had to deal with, had kept pace with your zeal and good intentions. I hope your health will, before this, have permitted you to push on the rear of the whole reinforcement beyond New-Windsor. Some of the enemy's ships have arrived in the Delaware, but how many have troops on board, I cannot exactly ascertain. The enemy has lately damaged Fort Mifflin considerably, but our people keep possession, and seem determined to do so to the last extremity. Our loss in men has been but small, — Captain Treat is unfortunately among the killed. I wish you a safe return, and am, dear sir,

Your most obedient servant,

G. WASHINGTON.

A careful survey of Hamilton's letters, justifies the conclusion, that it would have been difficult to have adopted a happier mode of attaining the objects of his mission. The situation in which he was placed was extremely difficult, one which required the most careful examination of opposite considerations, in which an error might have involved his principal in the greatest embarrassment, and might have resulted in the overthrow of all his youthful hopes.

An ordinary mind, overawed by the imposing situation of General Gates, would have acquiesced in the reasons assigned by him for the retention of the troops.

A determined youth, clothed with plenary powers, might have yielded to the tempting impulse of showing his authority, by requiring the whole force by a peremptory order, which if obeyed, might have produced a general discontent towards Washington, that would have been augmented by the clamours of the partizans of Gates in congress, and by his unbounded popularity in the eastern states, and if disobeyed, would have brought his authority into contempt.

Hamilton was aware of the difficulties of his situation, and while he fulfilled his orders, he shielded the commander-in-chief from all possible censure, and by his prudence deprived his enemies of every pretence of complaint; but after having ascertained that public opinion would sustain him in a more peremptory procedure, that the shallowness of General Gates' objections were perceived by all the military men at Albany, and that the people disbelieved the existence of any public necessity for the detention of the troops; penetrating the real motives of the delay, and believing this policy to be in subservience to that dangerous ambition which menaced the most alarming consequences to the republic, though still mingling mildness with energy, he assumed a bolder tone of remonstrance, made manifest the misconduct of Gates, and obtained more than his nice discretion had at first ventured to insist upon.

This deportment of a lad of twenty, negotiating with an officer buoyed up with his recent successes, already placed before the popular eye as the rival of Washington, sustained by a majority of congress, and hoping soon to supplant him, will be regarded as not the least remarkable, nor the least interesting incident of his life; — by Washington it never was forgotten.

While doing justice to the subject of this memoir, it is pain-

ful to raise the veil, and to dissipate those pleasing illusions, cherished from childhood, towards every eminent actor in the revolutionary struggle, which have ripened into a sentiment little short of personal attachment, more especially when the person inculcated is General Putnam.

Of some of these individuals, political differences have tinged the character with its baneful hues, and the merit of winning national independence has been forgotten, or thrown far into the shade by the more prominent interests which have since agitated the commonwealth; but the claims of Putnam stand alone upon his military achievements, and the story of his wondrous perils, and of his eminent prowess, is intermingled with, and has become a part of our national romance, so that we cannot endure that even the truth should lessen aught of the brightness of his glory. His rustic manners, and his imperfect education, have rather added to his reputation with the people, delighted to approximate him to themselves, and to appropriate a part of his fame; and he is associated in their minds with the rural consuls and dictators of uncorrupted Rome; but higher duties are to be fulfilled than to gratify national pride, and the story of the revolution is but half told when those difficulties are concealed, which were encountered and overcome by the men who achieved the liberty of their country.

The consequences of the delays which had been interposed in reinforcing the army were soon and sadly felt. — The fall of Fort Mifflin was a prelude to the evacuation of Red Bank. A reinforcement from New-York, enabled Cornwallis, with a detachment of two thousand men, to cross the river; from the procrastination in forming a junction with Glover's brigade, then on their march through the Jerseys, General Greene found himself too weak to intercept his adversary, and on the night of the twentieth of November, after the waste of so many lives, the water guard was destroyed, and the defences of the Delaware fell into

the hands of the enemy.* Howe, strengthened by the succours which now reached him, was enabled to hold possession of Philadelphia during the ensuing winter, "though just before the reduction of the forts, he balanced upon the point of quitting that city."

A letter from General Washington to congress, of the tenth of December, in which he mentions the movement of the enemy to Chestnut Hill, and their sudden retreat, expresses "a regret that they had not come to an engagement." This retreat was unquestionably owing to a discovery of the increased strength of the Americans. From this may be inferred Howe's condition at that moment, and it justifies the conclusion, that a prompt obedience to the orders conveyed by Hamilton, on the parts of Gates and Putnam, would not only have saved the defences of the river, so long and gallantly maintained, but by enabling the Americans to take a strong position in the vicinity of Red Bank, would have cut off the communication between the British army and fleet, and fulfilling Washington's prophecy, Howe would have been reduced to the situation of Burgoyne, thus probably terminating the war in the second year of our independence.†

* A very elaborate and able letter, August, 1777, discussing at great length the nature of the river defence proper to be adopted, is on file at Washington, in the handwriting of Hamilton.

† The conduct of Putnam, on this occasion, entered deeply into the breast of Washington; and we find him, in a letter from Valley Forge, dated March 6, 1778, thus expressing himself, in reference to the command at Rhode Island: "They also know with more certainty than I do, what will be the determination of congress respecting General Putnam; and, of course, whether the appointment of him to such a command as that at Rhode Island would fall within their views. It being incumbent on me to observe, that with such materials as I am furnished, the *work must go on*, — whether well or ill is another matter. — If, therefore, he and others are not laid aside, they must be placed *where they can least injure the service*."



CHAPTER VII.

[1777.]

THE history of the Revolution, as it has usually been told, is full of the marvellous. It is the portraiture of a civil conflict without vices or intrigues ; — the narrative of a league without refractory members.

Three millions of people have been represented as bursting from the bondage of Great Britain, and submitting without a question to the mild control of a government of their own choice ; and the curious inquirer, looking for the usual play of the passions which marks the conduct of men under such circumstances, has been asked to believe that, in this instance, all former experience was false ; that the sudden assumption of political rights was unattended with abuse, and that in America, resistance to oppression clothed all the leaders of the opposition with more than human virtues.

Yielding to this pleasing illusion, and pointing to the light bonds of the confederacy, it has been inferred that man can dispense with government, and that here at last has been found that which the wildest enthusiast hardly dared to hope, — a state of society where “men created free and equal,” require nothing more to make them virtuous and happy.

Without examining the premises from which this inference is derived, reason and the experience of this country prove the falsity of the conclusion ; and it is believed, that a true narrative of the twelve years which preceded the adoption of the present constitution of the United States, would show, that never did a people placed under circumstances so propitious to their well-being incur more unne-

cessary suffering, privation, and wrong than the American ; and that this is chiefly attributable to the jealousy of power which was encouraged by demagogues, and to the feebleness of the league whose powers they often arbitrarily administered.

These false appearances have been assumed to amuse the public mind ; and in the emulation of flattery, truth in all its just proportions has been excluded from the view.

The glory which the two first congresses shed upon the revolution seems to have dazzled every judgment as to the conduct of their successors ; and instead of those salutary lessons which are to be derived from their errors and misconduct, the freedom of history has been restrained, and those lights and shades which form part of every picture in which man is exhibited, are merged in a general blaze of indiscriminate admiration.

He will approach nearer to the truth, who while he represents the American people at first earnestly hoping a reconciliation with Great Britain, then angered by her menaces, and exasperated by her measures of coercion, entering upon the contest, stimulated by a sudden and intense desire of independence, as the only refuge,—in its progress sometimes doubting, often misled, but always true to their principles, and in all the ordinary features of their character raised and exalted, shows that they were sustained throughout this arduous struggle by the eminent qualities and pre-eminent popularity of one man, aided by the enlightened counsels of a few virtuous friends, who seemed raised up by providence to establish a great nation.

Among the arts of a later period, it has been contended as an evidence of the virtues of the times, but for the purpose of shielding individual misconduct, that Washington's course was unimpeded by opposition ; and that a man raised far above his cotemporaries, and resting on the support of a body as variable as the congress of the confederation, was

not an object of envy, and was at all times secure and firm in his position when every thing around him was in a state of fluctuation.

It falls, in natural connexion with the incidents of the preceding chapter, to show that it was the want of power, not the want of inclination, which prevented Washington, now revered as the Father of his Country, from being treated as a mere soldier of fortune.

The materials for this purpose, from the silence of the journals of congress, are imperfect; but from amidst the errors which have been promulgated respecting the proceedings of those secret councils where falsehood lies in ambush, enough may be gathered to establish this allegation.

As the origin of the great parties which have since divided this country had an intimate connexion with the project of forcing General Washington from the command of the army, a brief narrative of these events comes within the scope of this work.

On the fifteenth of June, 1775, Colonel Washington was unanimously elected, and on the seventeenth, the day on which the battle of Bunker's Hill was fought, was commissioned as commander-in-chief.

The enviable distinction of having nominated him to this place belongs to Thomas Johnson of Maryland, who soon after signalized his patriotism by hastening from civil life with a body of Maryland troops, to join the army during its retreat through New-Jersey, and who as a just tribute to his virtues and talents was elected the first governor of that state.

As this circumstance is not only one of great public interest, but had an important bearing on the political destinies of the country, and more especially as it has been erroneously supposed that this honour was claimed by John Adams, a distinguished member of that congress, it becomes

important to give the evidence on which this statement rests. It is found in the following extract of a letter from that gentleman to Colonel Pickering, dated August 6th, 1822. After giving an account of his journey to Philadelphia in 1775, in company with Cushing, Samuel Adams, and Paine, "four poor pilgrims," Mr. John Adams says, "they were met at Frankfort by Doctor Rush, Mr. Mifflin, Mr. Bayard, and others, who desired a conference, and particularly cautioned not to lisp the word 'Independence.' They added, you must not come forward with any bold measures; you must not pretend to take the lead; you know Virginia is the most populous state in the union; they are very proud of their ancient dominion, as they call it; they think they have a right to take the lead, and the southern states and middle states are too much disposed to yield it to them. This was plain dealing, Mr. Pickering; and, I must confess, that there appeared so much wisdom and good sense in it, that it made a deep impression on my mind, and it had an equal effect on all my colleagues. This conversation, and the principles, facts, and motives suggested in it, have given a colour, complexion, and character to the whole policy of the United States from that day to this. Without it, Mr. Washington would never have commanded our armies, nor Mr. Jefferson have been the author of the declaration of independence, nor Mr. Richard Henry Lee the mover of it, nor Mr. Chase the mover of foreign connexions.

"If I have ever had cause to repent of any part of this policy, that repentance ever has been, and ever will be, unavailing. — I had forgot to say, nor had Mr. Johnson *ever have been the nominator of Washington for General.*"

The signal merit which he had evinced in the war of seventeen hundred and fifty-six, justly secured to him a preference over every native American, and public feeling would have endured no other than a native.

Congress duly appreciated the popular sentiment, and

while they gladly availed themselves of foreign military experience, two days after* selected Artemas Ward of Massachusetts, as second in command, to fill the vacancy which might occur in case of the fall of Washington ; thus carefully avoiding the possibility of a foreigner being at the head of their armies.

In a season of profound peace, the revolution opened an attractive prospect to military men ; and foreigners in crowds proffered their services, urging their pretensions at a time when it was imagined that military experience could not be purchased at too high a price.

Of those who were first employed, the most conspicuous was General Charles Lee, a native of England, who had served in the British army in America. His romantic temper led him to seek distinction in the most remote and opposite regions of Europe ; he became a soldier of fortune, and served with equal interest in Portugal against the Spaniards, and in Poland against the Turks. Conscious of his own superiority, though of humble birth, he endured with bitter discontent the preference which he alleged, in his native country, interest enjoyed over unassisted merit. A sense of disappointment rankled in his breast, and yielding to this influence, and to the impulses of a wayward nature, he became an impetuous republican. With such feelings, the new world suddenly opened an unlimited sphere to his ambition, and, at the same time, presented to him the prospect of contending in arms against the men whom patronage had preferred to him, and of avenging himself upon those privileged orders, which, in his own estimate of his talents, he imagined had been the only obstacle to his advancement. Opinions so congenial with those which were beginning to prevail in America, strongly recommended him, and in the first selection of the general staff, he was

* June 17, 1775.

appointed a Major General, next in rank to Ward, on whose resignation he became second in command.

Although his military experience was considerable, such were the singular eccentricities of his character, that he soon alarmed those who guided the early councils of the country, by the most arbitrary acts and startling indiscretions. But nevertheless, he enjoyed the confidence of the people, who mistook his extravagances for genius, and who imagined that they saw even in the irregularities of his mind evidences of resources which only waited an opportunity for their display.

Led away by the impetuosity of his temper, he often transcended the strict bounds of his profession; but for every violation of discipline, his ready wit furnished a plausible excuse, while his reputed knowledge gave him an influence with the uninformed, to whom he was the more recommended by the pointed sarcasms which were always at his command.

His sneers and his apothegms were widely circulated, and men yielded a tacit approbation to covert jests, which would have been withheld from an open avowal of disapprobation.

Under this malign influence, the public consideration of the commander-in-chief, after the defeat on Long Island, the evacuation of New-York, the surrender of Fort Washington, and the retreat through the Jerseys, though exalted by the brilliant enterprises of Trenton and Princeton, began to diminish. But happily for Washington, most happily for his country, while disaffection was concentrating on this half hero, half madman, he was captured, under circumstances little creditable to his reputation.

The individual who next presented himself to the eye of faction, was Horatio Gates. Of humble origin, but ushered into life under the auspices of nobility, Gates was appointed an ensign in the British army, and served in the

West Indies, where he was distinguished by being selected as bearer of the despatches announcing the capture of Martinique. He subsequently visited America, and was with Washington in the defeat of Braddock, in which engagement he received a wound.

He returned to England for a short time, but induced by similar considerations with those which actuated General Lee, he revisited America, and retired to a plantation in Virginia, endeavouring there to forget that his native country had not duly appreciated his value.

At the opening of the revolution, and, it has been stated, upon the recommendation of General Washington, he was appointed Adjutant General of the army, and in May, 1776, was elected a Major General, Thomas Mifflin being chosen to fill the vacancy which the promotion of Gates had created. In the ensuing month he was directed to take the command in Canada, and such was the temper he thus early displayed, that congress found it necessary, soon after, to pass a resolution, that they had no design to invest him with a superior command to Schuyler, while the troops were within the bounds of the states.

By a series of intrigues, he recommended himself to the favour of a large party in congress, and soon after Schuyler had taken all the preparatory steps for the capture of Burgoyne, such was the clamour raised against him by the New-England troops, that he was superseded just in time to transfer his laurels to the brow of Gates.

The capture of a British army swelled his fame ;—the people, bewildered with his success, turned in murmurs towards Washington, and forgetting what he had done, demanded, with the levity of recent good fortune, why more had not been accomplished ? Emboldened by this feeling, the enemies of the commander-in-chief now cast their hopes upon his rival, as a fit instrument of their designs.

But never was a cabal more unfortunate in its selection.

Weak and vainglorious, Gates had precisely those traits of character which would recommend him to the designing, without the penetration to discover that he was used as a tool. Presumptuous and irresolute, he engaged in intrigues which he had not the sagacity to direct, and sought responsibilities which he had not the firmness to sustain.

This man, the giddy object of the hopes and fears of the discontented, was, through the arts of his partizans, possessed of the entire confidence of the New-England states,* where Washington, though idolized at subsequent periods of his life, was, at this time, far from being a favourite.

The cause of this may be assigned without difficulty. — Of the members which composed the American confederacy, the two in all respects the most important and influential, were the states of Virginia and Massachusetts. Virginia was the asylum of the cavaliers, — Massachusetts of the puritans; and the marked and distinctive traits of character of the early settlers, and their attendant prejudices, continued to present obstacles to any cordiality of feeling.

Their different modes of life, also had an influence in perpetuating the mutual dislike. The hardy sons of labour in the east, looked down with disdain, perhaps with envy, on wealth acquired without personal toil; while the almost lordly planter, returned with indignation the temper which could question the tenure of his wealth. With such predisposing causes of collision, it is not matter of surprise that in New-England, with her more concentrated population and active capital, the less informed of the people should ill have brooked that the control of armies, which her war-like sons principally filled, should be conferred on a soldier of the south. The jealousy which this selection inspired, was believed to have led to the resignation of General Ward, and was not softened by the presence of Washing-

* "He is their idol," said Schuyler, "because he is at their discretion."

ton before Boston, though followed by the evacuation of that town, and the removal of the seat of war.

The superior and general intelligence of this population, imparted to them a spirit of inquiry and vigilance of temper, which entered deeply into the composition of their character.

Hence flowed their just and early estimate of their colonial rights, which, extending widely through the country, established the standard of public opinion. — Hence an active and unceasing supervision of the conduct of their rulers, which constituted each individual a guardian of the interests of his immediate community. — Hence a confidence of opinion, a steadiness of purpose, and an untiring perseverance, which form their peculiar, and, perhaps, most valuable characteristics.

With these energetic features of character were connected qualities springing from the same source ; which, when they were withdrawn from their ordinary avocations, produced a spirit of insubordination that rendered them prone to discontent and difficult of conciliation.

The exertions of Washington to introduce discipline, had furnished early and unceasing causes of dissatisfaction among the militia drawn from this section of the country, who found in the forbearance and connivance of many of their inferior officers, not only occasions of panegyric, but motives of continued hostility and embittering comparison : forming a very large proportion of the combattants during all the war, they claimed a right to direct, and to control the councils of their superiors ; and while their numbers gave importance to their clamours, it increased the necessity of yielding to them on occasions, when to yield was to surrender every principle of authority.

In the frequent drafts made upon her patriotism, the feelings of the soldiers rapidly extended to the mass of the people of New-England ; and while no portion of the union

displayed more devotion to the cause of the revolution, in none was it more difficult to silence the clamours of the discontented. The superior population, — the larger quotas furnished to the army, — the more faithful discharge of the public burthens, were among the topics which their pride naturally dwelt upon, and not without reason ; for one state alone furnished a fourth of the troops which sustained the revolution : and not less just than forcible was the declaration of Hamilton, when, to express his high respect for her exertions, he said “that Massachusetts was the pivot on which the revolution turned.” The consciousness of this gave rise to claims of superiority, which were cherished by several of the leading individuals of that part of the country, who, by encouraging these sentiments served their own popularity at home, and, as they imagined, confirmed their title to a preponderance in the confederacy.

The calamities which befel the army on the invasion of Canada, and the series of disasters which followed the battle of Long Island, were alike attributed by them to the incapacity of the commander-in-chief ; and they were only waiting until some officer should be presented to the nation in a favourable point of view, to support him as a rival for public confidence, and the highest command.

It has been mentioned that the capture of Lee removed him from the public eye, and that the same party then directed their attention to General Gates. The evacuation of Ticonderoga, by St. Clair, though wholly unknown to General Schuyler, was a reverse of fortune magnified and misrepresented, and the opportunity of bestowing on their favourite so important a command, outweighed every consideration of delicacy to Schuyler, and was the more readily embraced because it was contrary to the known wishes of Washington, the judgment of Jay, and the feelings of New-York, which had evinced a steady determination to support the commander-in-chief. The hostility of this party,

which was disarmed by the success at Trenton, began to indicate itself anew after the affair of Germantown, when the misconduct of part of the troops called forth censures from head quarters, and led to numerous arrests.

On such occasions, the bravest officers cannot always escape unmerited obloquy ; and, unfortunately, individuals were found among them who too readily listened to overtures to join the cabal.

Letters, written under feelings of irritation, were addressed to the northern army, and circulated throughout the country. The newspapers were called in aid to disseminate the poison, and as soon as the victory of Saratoga was announced, the designs of the faction, which was known as the "Monster Party," were openly evinced in the most assiduous attentions to Gates, and extravagant eulogiums on his conduct, and in marked disrespect of Washington, and undisguised censures of his policy.

Among the most active partizans of the opposition, were a few foreigners, who arriving in this country with pretensions to the first grades in the army, had been found not to possess any real title to preferment. Of these, the foremost was Thomas Conway, who appearing before congress with the rank of Colonel in the French army, and decorated with the cross of the order of Saint Louis, — a vain, weak intriguer, had been, in the preceding spring, elected to the command of a brigade. Soon understood by Washington, Conway became his enemy, and opened a correspondence with Gates, in which, by flattering his vanity, and ridiculing the commander-in-chief, he confirmed him in the idea that he might easily supplant him.

Winter had now closed in, and while Washington was engaged in efforts to provide for his famishing and almost naked army, a communication was received from General Gates, marked with all the insolence of anticipated triumph.

A paragraph in a letter from Conway to Gates, "in which

General Washington's conduct was made the subject of free discussion and injurious remark, was the first occurrence which called forth the attention of the commander-in-chief; to this correspondence Gates lent a willing ear, and his answers to General Conway's letters were very much the echoes of the sentiments those letters contained."* The inquiries which ensued on the disclosure of this correspondence alarmed Gates, who with a view to fix the imputation on General Washington of having practised indirect means to arrive at the contents of his confidential correspondence, wrote him the letter referred to, throwing out an imputation that the extracts had been "stealingly copied," which was transmitted to him through the hands of the President of Congress.

GATES TO WASHINGTON.

Albany, December 8th, 1777.

SIR,

I shall not attempt to describe what, as a private gentleman, I cannot help feeling, on representing to my mind the disagreeable situation in which confidential letters, when exposed to public inspection, may place an unsuspecting correspondent; but as a public officer, I conjure your excellency to give me all the assistance you can, in tracing out the author of the infidelity which put extracts from General Conway's letters to me into your hands.

Those letters have been *stealingly copied*, but which of them, when, and by whom, is to me yet an unfathomable secret.

There is not one officer in my suite, nor amongst those who have free access to me, upon whom I could, with the least justification to myself, fix the suspicion, and yet my uneasiness may deprive me of the usefulness of the wor-

* Statement of facts, by Colonel Troup, who was an aid of Gates.

thiest men. It is, *I believe*, in *your excellency's power* to do me and the United States a very important service by detecting a wretch who may betray me, and capitally injure the very operations under *your immediate directions*. For this reason, sir, I beg your excellency will favour me with the proof you can procure to that effect. But the crime being eventually so important, that the least loss of time may be attended with the worst consequences, and it being unknown to me whether the letter came to you from a member of congress or an officer, I shall have the honour of transmitting a copy of this to the president, that the congress may, in concert with your excellency, obtain as soon as possible a discovery which so deeply affects the safety of the states. Crimes of that magnitude ought not to remain unpunished. I have the honour to be, with the greatest respect,

Your excellency's most humble

And most obedient servant,

HORATIO GATES.

His Excellency General Washington.

Washington thus replied :

WASHINGTON TO GATES.

Valley Forge, January 4th, 1777.

SIR,

Your letter of the 8th ultimo, came to my hands a few days ago, and to my great surprise informed me that a copy of it had been sent to congress,—for what reason I find myself unable to account ; but as some end, doubtless, was intended to be answered by it, I am laid under the disagreeable necessity of returning my answer through the same channel, lest any member of that honourable body should harbour an unfavourable suspicion of my having practised some indirect means to come at the contents of the confidential letters between you and General Conway.

I am to inform you, then, that Colonel Wilkinson, on his way to congress, in the month of October last, fell in with Lord Stirling at Reading, and not in confidence, that I ever understood, informed his aid-de-camp, McWilliams, that General Conway had written thus to you: "Heaven has been determined to save your country, or a weak general and bad counsellors would have ruined it." Lord Stirling, from motives of friendship, transmitted the account, with this remark, — "the enclosed was communicated by Colonel Wilkinson to Major McWilliams. Such duplicity of conduct I shall always think it my duty to defeat."

In consequence of this information, and without having any thing more in view than merely to show that gentleman that I was not unapprized of his intriguing disposition, I wrote him a letter in these words: "Sir, A letter which I received last night, contained the following paragraph in a letter from General Conway to General Gates, he says, — 'heaven has been determined to save your country, or a weak general and bad counsellors would have ruined it.' I am," &c.

Neither this letter, nor the information which occasioned it, was ever directly or indirectly communicated by me to a single officer in this army out of my own family, excepting the Marquis de la Fayette, who having been spoken to on the subject by General Conway, applied for, and saw, under injunctions of secrecy, the letter which contained Colonel Wilkinson's information. So desirous was I of concealing every matter that could in its consequences give the smallest interruption to the tranquillity of this army, or afford a gleam of hope to the enemy by dissensions therein.

Thus, sir, with openness and candour, which I hope will ever characterize and mark my conduct, have I complied with your request. The only concern I feel upon the occasion, finding how matters stand, is, that in doing this, I have necessarily been obliged to name a gentleman whom I am

persuaded, (although I never exchanged a word with him on the subject,) thought he was rather doing an act of justice, than committing an act of infidelity ; and sure I am, that till Lord Stirling's letter came to my hands, I never knew that General Conway (whom I viewed in the light of a stranger to you,) was a correspondent of yours, much less did I expect that I was the subject of your confidential letters. Pardon me, then, for adding, that so far from conceiving that the safety of the states can be affected, or in the smallest degree injured by a discovery of this kind, or that I should be called on in such solemn terms to point out the author, that I considered the information as coming from yourself, and given with a friendly view to forewarn, and, consequently, forearm me against a secret enemy ; or in other words, a *dangerous incendiary*, in which character, sooner or later, this country will know General Conway. But in this, as in other matters of late, I have found myself mistaken. I am, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

GEO. WASHINGTON.

The Hon. Major General Gates.

GATES TO WASHINGTON.

SIR,

The letter of the 4th inst. which I had the honour to receive yesterday from your excellency, has relieved me from unspeakable uneasiness. I now anticipate the pleasure it will give you when you discover that what has been conveyed to you for an extract of General Conway's letter to me, was not an information which friendly motives induced a man of honour to give, that injured virtue might be forewarned against secret enemies. The paragraph which your excellency has condescended to transcribe is spurious.

It was certainly fabricated to answer the most selfish and wicked purposes.

I cannot avoid sketching out to your excellency the history of General Conway's letter from the time that it came to my hands, by Lieutenant-Colonel Troup, my aid-de-camp, to whom General Conway delivered it at Reading, on the 11th of October, to this time, as far as it has affected me, and the officers of my family.

That letter contained very judicious remarks upon that want of discipline which has often alarmed your excellency, and I believe all observing patriots. The reasons which, in his judgment, deprived us of the success we would reasonably expect, were methodically explained by him; but neither the weakness of any of our generals, nor "bad counsellors," were mentioned, and consequently cannot be assigned or imagined as part of those reasons to which General Conway attributed some of our losses. He wrote to me as a candid observer, as other officers in every service write to each other for obtaining better intelligence than that of newspapers, and that freedom renders such letters thus far confidential in some measure. The judgment of the person who received them points out to him, according to time and circumstances, the propriety or impropriety attending their being communicated when no particular injunction of secrecy was requested.

Particular actions, rather than persons, were blamed, but with impartiality; and I am convinced that he did not aim at lessening, in my opinion, the merit of any person. His letter was perfectly harmless: however, now that various reports have been circulated concerning its contents, they ought not to be submitted to the solemn inspection of those who stand most high in the public esteem.

Anxiety and jealousy would arise in the breast of very respectable officers, who, rendered sensible of faults which inexperience, and that alone may have led them into,

would be unnecessarily disgusted, if they perceived a probability of such errors being recorded.

Honour forbids it, and patriotism demands, that I should return the letter into the hands of the writer. I will do it, but at the same time I declare that the paragraph conveyed to your excellency as a genuine part of it, was in words as well as in substance, a wicked forgery.

About the beginning of December I was informed that letter had occasioned an explanation between your excellency and that gentleman. Not knowing whether the whole letter or part of it had been stealingly copied, but fearing malice had altered its original features, I own, sir, that a dread of the mischiefs which might attend the forgery I suspected would be made, put me for some time in a most painful situation. When I communicated to the officers in my family the intelligence I had received, they all entreated me to rescue their characters from the suspicions they justly conceived themselves liable to until the guilty person should be known. To facilitate the discovery, I wrote your excellency; but unable to learn whether General Conway's letter had been transmitted to you by a member of congress, or a gentleman in the army, I was afraid much time would be lost in the course of the inquiry, and that the states might receive some capital injury from the infidelity of the person who I thought had stolen a copy of the obnoxious letter, was it not probable that the secrets of the army might be attained and betrayed through the same means to the enemy?

For this reason, sir, not doubting that congress would most cheerfully concur with you in tracing out the criminal, I wrote to the president, and enclosed to him a copy of my letter to your excellency.

About the same time I was forwarding these letters, Brigadier General Wilkinson returned to Albany. I informed him of the treachery which had been committed, but I con-

cealed from him the measures I was pursuing to unmask the author. Wilkinson answered, he was assured it never would come to light, and endeavoured to fix my suspicions on Lieutenant-Colonel Troup, who said he might have incautiously conversed on the substance of General Conway's letter with Colonel Hamilton, whom you had sent not long before to Albany. I did not listen to this insinuation against your aid-de-camp and mine. I considered it ungenerous ; but the light your excellency has just assisted me with, exhibiting the many qualifications which are necessarily blended together by the head and heart of General Wilkinson, I would not omit this fact. It would enable your excellency to judge whether or not he would scruple to make such a forgery as that which he now stands charged with, and ought to be exemplarily punished. To attempt sowing dissensions among the principal officers of the army, and rendering them odious to each other by false suggestions and forgeries, is, in my opinion, a crime of the first magnitude, and involves with it all the consequences of positive treason. That the forgery now in view was machinated for injuring General Conway, and perhaps myself, in your judgment, is now evident to me ; and I trust the detection will operate, as it ought to operate, upon your excellency, as well as the members of the congress before whom your letter necessitates me to lay this answer. The station of the calumniator seems to justify your excellency for having believed till now that the extract was genuine : and yet, sir, I cannot help wishing you had sent me a copy of it immediately after your explanation with General Conway.

Would that your excellency's prediction relative to him had not been inserted in your letter which came to me unsealed, through the hands of congress. I sincerely wish the detection of this forgery may render us all more cautious ; and that to procure a fair and dispassionate explanation

whenever insinuations are made to the prejudice of respected characters, may become an established rule in society, as well as in public business throughout the United States.

I am with unfeigned respect, sir,

Your excellency's most humble and

Most obedient servant,

HORATIO GATES.

January 23d, 1778.

This extraordinary attempt, after having substantially admitted in his first letter the genuineness of the extract from Conway's letter, to induce the belief that it was a forgery, and a forgery committed by Colonel Wilkinson, a member of his own staff, was thus commented upon.

WASHINGTON TO GATES.

Head Quarters, Valley Forge, February 9th, 1778.

SIR :

I was duly favoured with your letter of the 23d last month, to which I should have replied sooner, had I not been delayed by business that required my more immediate attention.

It is my wish to give implicit credit to the assurances of every gentleman; but on the subject of our present correspondence, I am sorry to confess, there happens to be some unlucky circumstances which involuntarily compel me to consider the discovery you mention, not so satisfactory and conclusive as you seem to think it.*

* In a private letter from General Washington to Mr. Jay, dated April 14, 1779, he observes, "I discovered very early in the war, symptoms of coldness and constraint in General Gates' behaviour to me. These increased as he rose into greater consequence, but we did not come to a direct breach till the beginning of last year. This was occasioned by a correspondence, which I thought made rather free with me, between him and General Conway, which accidentally came to my knowledge. The particulars of this affair, you will find delineated in the packet herewith, endorsed 'Papers respecting General Con-

I am so unhappy as to find no small difficulty in reconciling the spirit and import of your different letters, and sometimes the different parts of the same letter with each other.

It is not unreasonable to presume, that your first information of my having notice of General Conway's letter, came from himself; there were very few in the secret, and it is natural to suppose, that he being immediately concerned, would be the most interested to convey the intelligence to you. It is also far from improbable, that he acquainted you with the substance of the passage communicated to me; one would expect this, if he believed it to be spurious, in order to ascertain the imposition and evince his innocence, especially as he seemed to be under some uncertainty as to the precise contents of what he had written, when I signified my knowledge of the matter to him. If he neglected doing it, the omission cannot easily be interpreted into any thing else than a consciousness of the reality of the extract, if not literally, at least substantially. If he did not neglect it, it must appear somewhat strange that the forgery remained so long undetected, and that your first letter to me from Albany, of the eighth of December, should tacitly recognise the genuineness of the paragraph in question; while your only concern at that time seemed to be, the "tracing out the author of the infidelity, which put extracts of General Conway's letters into my hands." Throughout the whole of that letter, the reality of the extracts is, by the fairest implication, allowed, and your only solicitude was to find out the person who brought them to light. After making the most earnest pursuit of the author of the supposed treachery, without saying a word about the truth or falsehood of the passage, your letter of the twenty-third ultimo,

way.' Besides the evidence contained in them of the genuineness of the offensive correspondence, *I have other proofs still more convincing, which having been given me in a confidential way, I am not at liberty to impart.*"

to my great surprise, proclaims it in words, as well as substance, a "wicked forgery."

It is not my intention to contradict this assertion, but only to intimate some considerations, which tend to induce a supposition, that though none of General Conway's letters to you contain the offensive passage mentioned, there might have been something in them too nearly related to it, that could give such an extraordinary alarm. It may be said, if this were not the case, how easy, in the first instance, to declare there was nothing exceptionable in them, and to have produced the letters themselves in support of them? This may be thought the most proper and effectual way of refuting misrepresentations, and removing all suspicion. The propriety of the objections suggested against submitting them to inspection, may very well be questioned; the various reports circulated concerning their contents were, perhaps, so many arguments for making them speak for themselves, to place the matter upon the footing of certainty. Concealment, in an affair which had made so much noise, though not by my means, will naturally lead men to conjecture the worst, and it will be a subject of speculation even to candour itself. The anxiety and jealousy you apprehend from revealing the letter, will be very apt to be increased by suppressing it. It may be asked, why not submit to inspection a performance perfectly harmless, and of course conceived in terms of proper caution and delicacy? Why suppose that "anxiety and jealousy" would have arisen in the breasts of very respectable officers, or that they would have been necessarily disgusted at being made sensible of their faults when related with judgment and impartiality by a candid observer? Surely they could not have been unreasonable enough to take offence at a performance so perfectly inoffensive, "blaming actions rather than persons," which have evidently no connexion with one another, and indulgently "recording the errors of inexperience."

You are pleased to consider General Conway's letters as of a confidential nature, observing, that "time and circumstances must point out the propriety or impropriety of communicating such letters." Permit me to inquire, whether, when there is an impropriety in communication, it is only applicable with respect to the parties who are the subject of them? One might be led to imagine this to be the case, from your having admitted others into the secret of your confidential correspondence, at the same time that you thought it ineligible it should be trusted to those officers whose actions underwent its scrutiny. Your not knowing whether the letter under consideration "came to me from a member of congress or from an officer," plainly indicates that you had originally communicated it to at least one of that honourable body; and I learn from General Conway, that before his late arrival at York-Town, it had been committed to the perusal of several of its members, and was afterwards shown by himself to three more. It is somewhat difficult to conceive a reason, founded in generosity, for imparting the free and confidential strictures of this ingenuous censor on the operations of the army under my command, to a member of congress; but, perhaps, "time and circumstances pointed it out." It must be indeed acknowledged, that the faults of very respectable officers, not less injurious for being the result of inexperience, were not improper topics to engage the attention of members of congress.

It is, however, greatly to be lamented, that this adept in military science, did not employ his abilities in the progress of the campaign, in pointing out those wise measures which were calculated to give us "that degree of success we might reasonably expect." The United States have lost much by that unseasonable diffidence, which prevented his embracing the numerous opportunities he had in council, of

displaying those rich treasures of knowledge and experience he has since so freely laid open to you. I will not do him the injustice to impute the penurious reserve, which ever appeared in him on such occasions, to any other cause than an excess of modesty ; neither will I suppose he possesses no other merit than of that kind of sagacity, which qualifies a man better for profound discoveries of errors that have been committed, and advantages that have been lost, than for the exercise of that foresight and provident discernment, which enable him to avoid the one and anticipate the other ; but, willing as I am to subscribe to all his pretensions, and believe that his remarks on the operations of the campaign were very judicious, and that he has sagaciously descanted on many things that might have been done, I cannot help being a little sceptical as to his ability to have found out the means of accomplishing them, or to prove the sufficiency of those in our possession. These minutiae, I suspect, he did not think worth his attention, particularly as they might not be within the compass of his views.

Notwithstanding the hopeful presages you are pleased to figure to yourself of General Conway's firm and constant friendship to America, I cannot persuade myself to retract the prediction concerning him, which you so emphatically wish had not been inserted in my last. A better acquaintance with him than I have reason to think you have had, from what you say, and a concurrence of circumstances oblige me to give him but little credit for the qualities of his heart, of which, at least, I beg leave to assume the privilege of being a tolerable judge. Were it necessary, more instances than one might be adduced from his behaviour and conversation, to manifest that he is capable of all the malignity of detraction, and all the meanness of intrigue, to gratify the absurd resentment of disappointed vanity, or to

answer the purposes of personal aggrandizement, and promote the interest of a faction.

I am, with respect, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

GEO. WASHINGTON.

Major General Gates.

To this biting sarcasm, which no man conscious of his innocence would have brooked, General Gates gave the following submissive reply.

GATES TO WASHINGTON.

SIR,

I yesterday had the honour to receive your excellency's letter of the 9th instant, and earnestly hope no more of that time, so precious to the public, may be lost upon the subject of General Conway's letter. Whether that gentleman does or does not deserve the suspicions you express, would be entirely indifferent to me, did he not possess an office of high rank in the army of the United States; for that reason solely, I wish he may answer all the expectations of congress.

As to the gentleman, I have no personal connexion with him, nor had I any correspondence previous to his writing the letter which has given offence, nor have I since written to him, save to certify what I know to be the contents of the letter. He, therefore, must be responsible;—as I heartily dislike controversy, even upon my own account, and much more in a matter wherein I was only accidentally concerned. In regard to the parts of your excellency's letter addressed particularly to me, I solemnly declare, that I am of no faction, and if any of my letters, taken aggregately or by paragraphs, convey any meaning which, in any construction, is offensive to your excellency, that was by no means the intention of the writer. After this, I cannot be-

lieve your excellency will either suffer your suspicions, or the prejudices of others, to induce you to spend another moment upon the subject.

With great respect, I am, sir,

Your excellency's most obedient, humble serv't,

HORATIO GATES.

“General Wilkinson,” says Colonel Troup, “by his activity and talents, and by the influence he had acquired over Gates’ mind, rendered himself very important in the operations which led to the convention of Saratoga. The consequent kindness of Gates honoured Wilkinson with being the bearer of Gates’ despatches to congress; and, during this event, Wilkinson, in carrying the despatches, loitered so long on his way that the intelligence preceded him, which induced Roger Sherman, a shrewd member from Connecticut, to move in Congress that Wilkinson should be complimented with a *pair of spurs*. In the course of some weeks afterwards, Gates was informed that the substance of the correspondence was known to General Washington.

“The information excited such unpleasant feelings in the breast of General Gates, as to impel him to make inquiries among the gentlemen of his family to discover the traitor. These gentlemen positively disavowed all knowledge of the traitor, and declared their inability even to suggest any clue to his detection.

“It cannot be matter of surprise, in the absence of all other evidence, that circumstances so colourable should have made a serious impression on General Gates. The impression was more serious against Colonel Hamilton than Colonel Troup; for the former, though very young, had, by his extraordinary talents, and the correctness of his conduct, acquired a standing at head-quarters that kindled the jealousy of some officers who were inclined to think unfavourably of him.

vourably of General Washington. Not long after, the mystery was unravelled by satisfactory proof that General Wilkinson was the traitor. It appeared that in going to congress with despatches, he fell in with a part of General Washington's army at Reading : there, in a convivial party of which an aid of Lord Stirling was one, Wilkinson disclosed the substance of the correspondence, and his lordship on receiving the fact from his aid, hastened to communicate it to General Washington, whereby the honour of Colonel Troup and Colonel Hamilton were left without the shadow of reproach.

“The treachery of Wilkinson had the effect of severing the ties which had long bound him and General Gates to each other ; and in the end it likewise produced a duel between them, which fortunately terminated without the shedding of blood.”

The communications with Gates were closed on the 24th February, 1778, with a cold, dignified, and withering assent to his humble proposition to bury all that had passed in oblivion.

WASHINGTON TO GATES.

Valley Forge, February 24th, 1778.

SIR :

I yesterday received your favour of the 19th instant. I am as averse to controversy as any man ; and had I not been forced into it, you never would have had occasion to impute to me even a shadow of a disposition towards it. Your repeatedly and solemnly disclaiming any offensive views in these matters which have been the subject of our past correspondence, makes me willing to close with the desire you express, of burying them hereafter in silence ; and, as far as future events will permit, oblivion.

My temper leads me to peace and harmony with all men ; and it is particularly my wish to avoid any personal

feuds or dissensions with those who are embarked in the same great national contest with myself; as every difference of this kind must, in its consequences, be injurious.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

GEORGE WASHINGTON.

Major General Gates.

This correspondence, written on the part of Washington, with a master's hand, while it covered Gates with shame and confusion, afforded to Hamilton abundant cause of exultation in so triumphant a vindication of his own character, and of the conduct of his chief.

The justice of General Washington's charge that a faction existed both in congress and the army, has never until recently been made a subject of doubt.

The proceedings of congress, the attestation of the few survivors of the revolution, and the confidential correspondence of the officers, place the fact beyond all question. It rests, exclusive of other evidence, on the testimony of Washington, Greene, and La Fayette, Colonels Harrison, Hamilton, and Laurens.

On the seventeenth of October, 1777, congress, departing from their established practice of confining such powers to their own body, determined to create a Board of War, to consist of three persons, not members of congress, which, among various other duties, was directed "to superintend the several branches of the military establishment;" all officers were enjoined to observe its directions, and the states were recommended to give this board all necessary assistance in the execution of the business of their department.

On the thirty-first of October, Colonel Wilkinson announced officially to congress the capture of Burgoyne, of which they had been previously advised; and a committee, consisting of Samuel Adams, Richard Henry Lee, and Mr. Ro-

berdeau, was appointed to prepare a recommendation to the states to set apart a day of thanksgiving for this signal success, which on the ensuing day was reported to congress, and breathed all the deep-toned fervour of religious enthusiasm which mark the character of Samuel Adams.

On the fourth of November, resolutions of thanks to General Gates and to the officers serving under him, which this important event justly called for, were passed by congress. The friends of Gates were not content with this ; and notwithstanding he had volunteered through Wilkinson an apology for the terms of the capitulation, which had already called forth the loudest public reprobation, and than which nothing could have been more futile ; “ that the reduction of Fort Montgomery, and the enemy’s progress up the river endangered the arsenal at Albany, a reflection which left him no time to contest the capitulation,” these terms were “ pronounced honourable and advantageous to the states.” At the same time, the committee to whom the motion for directing the future operations of the army under General Gates was referred, brought in a report, which, after debate, was committed, and Mr. Duer added to the committee ; and, on the ensuing day a report was introduced, upon which it was resolved, “ that General Washington be informed that it is the earnest wish of congress to regain the possession of the forts and passes of the Hudson river,” and that for that purpose General Gates should remain in command in that quarter, and that Putnam join the main army with such a detachment from Gates’ army “ as General Washington may think can be spared, not exceeding twenty-five hundred men, including Colonel Morgan’s corps.” Authority was given Gates to order such of the continental troops and militia as were posted near the Hudson to join him ; and he was empowered to call on the several states for such number of militia as he shall judge necessary, to maintain

the posts on the river, "to the end that his army may be in readiness to pursue such operations as congress shall direct." He was also authorized to ask all farther means he required. The governor and council of New-York were directed to be furnished with copies of these resolutions; to appoint a committee to assist Gates, which committee were requested and empowered to call on the states of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode-Island, Connecticut, New-York, and New-Jersey, to furnish such number of men as he should require for this object; and farther authority was given to him to call for all the necessary aids to reduce Ticonderoga and Fort Independence; to which was added a resolution,— "That if General Washington, after *consulting General Gates* and Governor Clinton, shall be of opinion that a larger reinforcement can be detached to the main army, consistent with the attainment of the objects, (previously specified,) in such case he be *directed* to order such farther reinforcements to the main army, as may be thought conducive to the general welfare, any thing in the preceding resolution to the contrary notwithstanding."*

In debating the last resolution, it was moved after "*directed*," to insert "*with their concurrence*," which was negatived by a vote of all the states except Massachusetts and one vote from Rhode-Island, and the general resolutions were adopted by every state except Massachusetts, which was divided, and by one vote from Rhode-Island.†

* This resolution appears on the journals as a part of the report of this committee. This would seem to be an error; — as its effect is to defeat the intention of the report, the probability is, that it was proposed to be appended to the report with that view, and that on that motion the amendment was suggested.

† The votes were as follows: — For inserting "*with their concurrence*."

Affirmative. — Messrs. Samuel Adams, John Adams, Gerry, Marchant, Dyer. — 5.

Negative. — Messrs. Folsom, Lovell, Law, Williams, Duane, Duer, Elmer,

The importance of drawing reinforcements, at this time, from the northern army, and the disastrous consequences which resulted from General Gates' conduct, have been seen in the previous chapter.

Early in the month of October, General Vaughan, in order to create a diversion in favour of Burgoyne, moved up the Hudson, came in sight on the fifth, and on the night of the sixth of that month attacked the Forts Clinton and Montgomery. The former, a circular height, defended by a line for musketry, with a barbet battery in the centre of three guns, and flanked by two redoubts: the latter, "strongly fortified by nature, almost inaccessible in itself, and sufficiently manned," were both, "after a feeble and unskilful defence, carried by storm," and the greater part of the troops captured, with the loss of cannon and stores of immense value, and of two frigates. Governor Clinton, who commanded, a man of courage, and, on most occasions, active and vigorous, having escaped.

On the fifteenth of the same month, the enemy made a descent on Esopus, which, with a barbarity that affixed infamy on the expedition, was burnt to the ground; no defence other than the scattered firing of the inhabitants being offered, while a large body of troops remained unemployed in the vicinity.

While Gates assigned to Hamilton "a projected attack on Ticonderoga, and the importance of the arsenal at Albany," as the pretext for maintaining an army around him, the recovery of these fortresses was deemed by his party in con-

Morris, Roberdeau, Clingan, Smith, Rumsey, Jones, F. L. Lee, Harvie, Penn, Harnett, Laurens. — 18.

For the *general resolution*.

Affirmative. — Messrs. Folsom, J. Adams, Lovell, Law, Williams, Duane, Duer, Elmer, Morris, Clingan, Smith, Rumsey, Jones, F. L. Lee, Harvie, Penn, Harnett, Laurens. — 18.

Negative. — Messrs. S. Adams, Gerry, Marchant, Dyer, Roberdeau. — 5.

gress a more adequate reason ; but it was a wholly insufficient one.

On the first of November, Washington had addressed an official letter to that body, informing them that he had written to Generals Dickinson and Forman, to afford every aid in their power to the posts on the Delaware ; mentioning the mission of Hamilton to Gates ; that the enemy were stronger than he had supposed ; that reinforcements were coming in to General Howe, while by the departure of the Virginia militia, he had no aid to the continental troops other than a body from Philadelphia and a few from Maryland, and giving indisputable reasons for his not attempting to dislodge the enemy from Philadelphia.

Notwithstanding these circumstances, the Cabal had given to Gates an independent command ; had limited, by its first resolution, the succours which Washington was to receive to two thousand five hundred men, although he had deemed nearly three times that number necessary to enable him to give a decisive blow to the enemy ; and had sought by the last, to render the extent of the reinforcements, and the measures of the main army dependent on the concurrence of an inferior and a rival ; as to whom it was the intention, that he should add to his newly-earned honours, the easy recovery of the Highland passes, “to the end that his army might be in readiness to pursue such operations as congress shall direct ;” while, in the mean time, the fall of the posts on the Delaware, and the undisturbed possession of Philadelphia by the enemy, would have produced such invidious contrasts, and artfully excited discontent would have become so loud, and calumny so bold, that an apparent deference to public opinion might have justified the sacrifice of Washington.

The refusal of the commander-in-chief to march directly to Philadelphia, on the embarkation of Howe, in the preceding spring, was one of the earliest avowed causes of dissatisfaction.

The state of Pennsylvania, which had hitherto escaped the calamities of invasion, readily listened to the suggestions which were thrown out against Washington; and many members of congress, who looked to the preservation of that city as the principal subject of solicitude, were willing, for this purpose, to sacrifice the more important object of preventing a junction of the British forces.

These feelings, unfortunately for the service, found a powerful auxiliary in General Mifflin, a native of Pennsylvania, of extensive influence, great activity and great personal popularity, but of a hot, impatient temper, an ambition little disposed to be satisfied with a fair share of favour, and a judgment, which, though prompt, was not free from the influence of flattery or prejudice.

This gentleman had performed, at the beginning of the revolution, the duties of Quarter-master-general, a station which he left; but, after serving a short time in the line of the army, resumed, at the request of congress, in the autumn of 1776, and continued to fill until just before the army retired from the field.

A committee of congress, appointed to investigate the state of that department, made a report conveying the most serious censures upon General Mifflin. The public property was represented as being scattered in every direction, and only saved by the casual interference of some officer of the line. "Not a gentleman of any rank in this department is in camp, although the duties of the office require constant and unremitting attention. Not a moment's time," say they, "is to be lost, in placing a man of approved abilities and extensive capacity at the head of the department, who will *restore* it to some degree of order and regularity, whose provident care will immediately relieve the wants of the army, and extend itself to those which must be satisfied, before we can expect vigour, enterprise, and success."

Such censure, the frequent, nay constant and unavoid-

able complaints of Washington, and his earnest desire to place Greene at the head of this department, between whom and Mifflin unkind feelings existed, were alike calculated to irritate his mind, and embitter his hostility to the commander-in-chief.

On the 8th of October he addressed a letter to congress requesting leave to resign his commission as major-general and quarter-master-general, on account of ill health.

Compelled by the force of public opinion, congress accepted his resignation as quarter-master-general, but resolved that his rank and commission as major-general should be retained, but without pay, until their farther order. And yet on the same day, such was the influence of the cabal in congress, that, in the selection of the members of the board of war, Mifflin was placed at its head; while to render it less offensive to Washington, Colonel Pickering, and Colonel Harrison, the general's secretary, were associated with him.

Notwithstanding the language of congress respecting the terms of the convention with Burgoyne, the public discontent could not be stifled. The committee of New-York wrote in terms of the strongest censure; and it became necessary to bring the subject again under the consideration of congress. The committee to which it was referred brought in a report;* but in the belief that more time was necessary to obtain a proper knowledge of the facts, it was proposed to postpone the consideration of it, which was adopted,† but not without a wide division of opinion.‡ This subject was subsequently resumed, when motions for a committee of inquiry, and for obtaining intelligence, were defeated; and yet such was the dissatisfaction of subsequent

* November 8. † November 22.

‡ Nov. 8. The votes were—*affirmative*, Folsom, Gerry, Law, Williams, Duane, Duer, Elmer, Smith, Harvie, Perrin, Hamett.

Negative. Samuel Adams, John Adams, Lovell, Marchant, Dyerr, Roberdeau, Clingan, Jones, F. L. Lee, Laurens.

congresses with this capitulation, that the obligations of good faith were forgotten — at least, never fulfilled.

General Mifflin and Colonel Pickering accepted seats at the board of war, but Colonel Harrison, from considerations of delicacy arising from his relation to the commander-in-chief, declined the appointment.

Within a short interval, a report of the board of war stated, that, after a conference with General Mifflin, they were of opinion, that “a sufficient number of commissioners had not been appointed in order to give due weight to the execution of the regulations which might be recommended by the board, and adopted by congress, and particularly for enabling one of the board to visit, from time to time, the different armies, in order to see that their regulations were executed, and to examine what the wants of the army were, and what defects or abuses prevail from time to time in the different departments.” Upon this report it was resolved that two additional commissioners be appointed; and on the 27th of November three commissioners were elected, and General Gates appointed President of the board of war. A resolution was also adopted, that the President of congress should inform General Gates of his appointment, expressing “the high sense congress entertain of his abilities and peculiar fitness to discharge the duties of that important office, upon the right execution of which the success of the American cause does eminently depend — that it is the intention of congress to continue his rank as major-general, and that he may officiate at the board or in the field, as occasion may require; and that he be requested to repair to congress with all convenient despatch, to enter upon the duties of his appointment.”

The whole of the proceedings following the events which have been related were distinctly understood, as preparatory to more decisive measures of hostility: and the selection of General Mifflin in the first instance, known to be

hostile to the commander-in-chief, and the choice of Gates as a coadjutor, at the head of a department, invested with a control of all the military operations with which Washington had immediate intercourse, and upon which he must chiefly depend, left no room to doubt the nature of the influence which then controlled the policy of congress. If any question could have existed, it was soon after removed by an act of the most unequivocal hostility — this was, a resolution founded upon a report of the board of war, to whom were referred the letters of Brigadier Conway, “that it was essential to the promotion of discipline in the American army, and to the reformation of the various abuses which prevail in the different departments, that an appointment be made of Inspectors-General, agreeable to the practice of the best disciplined armies in Europe” — that this appointment be conferred on experienced and vigilant general officers, who are acquainted with whatever relates to the general economy, manœuvres, and discipline of a well-regulated army.”

Powers were conferred on this office in effect paramount to those of the commander-in-chief. It was resolved that two inspectors-general should be appointed; and on the same day* Conway was elected inspector-general, and also appointed a major-general of the army — the man who had been detected intriguing with Gates, and whom Washington denounced as a “dangerous incendiary.”

This last step following the recent advancement of Wilkinson to the grade of brigadier, was resented by the army as a gross indignity. General Greene in a manly and independent letter† rebuked the conduct of congress. A remonstrance was presented by the general and field officers without the knowledge of Washington — Conway was compelled to retire from the inspectorship, and Wilkinson to resign his short-lived honours.

* December 13th, 1777.

† Dated January 12th, 1778.

The communications received by Washington from various parts of the country, and from his friends in congress, fully confirmed the belief that a party had been formed against him in that body, and was rapidly extending.

Rumours were put in circulation, that, yielding to the public feeling, he purposed to resign, and to such an extent was the impression created, that some of his warmest friends were alarmed, lest, under all the pressure of circumstances he might be led to this sacrifice. But Washington was surrounded by men who knew his value, and would have sustained his determination had it faltered; but never for an instant did he indulge a purpose of such fatal tendency. "The moment," said he, "I become sensible the majority of the people wish me out, I will resign; until then I am determined to withstand this intrigue."

His course was obvious: relying with confidence and security on his well-founded popularity, he assumed a tone of decision and independence in his correspondence with congress, which at once proved his fearlessness of the charges which were maliciously circulated against him, and his consciousness, that in an issue between that body and the nation, his policy would receive its just estimate.

A short time after the appointment of Conway as inspector-general, the same faction, in full pursuit of their object, though a committee had recently visited the camp, and reported measures of reform in the different departments of the army, adopted with the concurrence of Washington and Greene, succeeded in the election of a new committee* of three members of congress and three members of the board of war, to repair to head-quarters, with general powers, "to reorganize the different battalions; to recommend the appointment of general officers; to remove officers in the civil departments of the army, and to adopt

* January 10th, 1778.

such measures as they should judge necessary for introducing economy, and promoting discipline and good morals in the army."

A committee with such powers, could be viewed in no other light than as a permanent court of inquiry on the conduct of the commander-in-chief, to exercise the most rigid inquisition. The members of the committee were Messrs. Dana, Reed, and Folsom of congress, and Generals Gates, Mifflin, and Colonel Pickering of the board of war.

Aware of the distressed situation of the army from the reiterated representations of the commander-in-chief, the same faction, as though their intention was to accumulate insult upon insult, adopted a resolution,* "applauding the rising spirit of the people of Pennsylvania to recover their capital, declaring the readiness of congress to aid in it, and directing the committee in camp to consult with the President and Council of Pennsylvania, and with General Washington, on the practicability of an attack." At the same time, anonymous charges were addressed to the President of Congress, to provoke the angry feelings of that body, and the excitement of the legislature of Pennsylvania was called in aid to co-operate with the projects of the Cabal. The language of this resolution, called forth an indignant remonstrance from the commander-in-chief, in which, after portraying the condition of the army, destitute of food, clothing, and shelter, he animadverted strongly on the reckless indifference to their sufferings, evinced by these agitators.†

An incident occurred at this time, which marks the effect

* January 16, 1778.

† "I can assure those gentlemen, that it is a much easier and less distressing thing to draw remonstrances in a comfortable room, by a good fire-side, than to occupy a cold, bleak hill, and sleep under frost and snow, without clothes or blankets. However, although they seem to have little feeling for the naked and distressed soldiers, I feel superabundantly for them, and from my soul pity those miseries which it is not in my power to relieve or to prevent."

of the letter of the ninth of January, addressed by Washington to Gates. It will be observed, that the appointment of the committee to visit camp, was made on the twelfth of January. That letter was received about this time ; for it will be perceived, by a juggle with his partizans, a resolution was adopted on the twentieth of January, “that the members attending the business of the board of war, inquire of General Gates whether he can go to camp agreeably to his appointment, for the purpose expressed in the resolution of the tenth instant, and when he can set out on that business ;” and on the afternoon of the same day, “the members of the board of war reported to congress sundry reasons assigned by General Gates why the members of the board of war ought immediately to enter on the business of that department ;” and it was resolved that General Gates and General Mifflin should be excused from attending camp, and Messrs. Morris and Carroll, (for the tide had already begun to turn,) known friends of Washington, were substituted.

At the close of the preceding year, Messrs. Lee and Lovell, two members of the committee of foreign affairs, had enclosed to the commander-in-chief, a plan and various resolutions of congress, for an attack upon Canada, during the next campaign, in conjunction with a body of French troops. In a very able letter received by congress from Washington, all the bearings of this project were examined : — The force necessary for success, the requisite supplies, the nature and extent of the resistance, the obstacles to be overcome, and the uncertainty of results depending on a co-operation upon so extensive and complex a plan, and requiring a coincidence of circumstances too fortunate to be hoped for ; and the scheme, it was supposed, had been abandoned ; but the successes on the northern frontier had, at this time, so much inflated the minds of that body, that a new project was brought forward and countenanced, for a winter expedition into Canada, and a committee was appointed to

confer with Washington on the means of carrying on this campaign.

This committee, in an interview with him, had been fully satisfied that the project was impracticable, and, for a time, this design appeared also to have been relinquished.

The Cabal had, however, decided not to yield their purpose, (a favourite object with the people,) which might have the double effect of adding lustre to their influence, and giving an opportunity to their favourite Conway to gather laurels, where Schuyler and St. Clair had been unfortunate.

Notwithstanding the ascertained wants of the army* had induced congress, (forgetful of the principles which had so lately introduced into the confederation, the narrow clauses which were productive of so much subsequent inconvenience,) only a month prior to this time, to take the extraordinary step of recommending the enactment of laws, by the several legislatures, of the most oppressive and arbitrary character.† Within a week after the resolution to capture Philadelphia, the board of war, to whom the subject had been transferred from the committee previously appointed, introduced a report, which was adopted,‡ recommending

* Washington, in a circular, states, "that there were, on the twenty-ninth of December, two thousand eight hundred and ninety-eight men unfit for duty, by reason of their being *barefoot* and otherwise *naked*." — December 29, 1777.

† On the twentieth December, 1777, the legislatures were earnestly recommended forthwith to enact laws, appointing suitable persons to seize and take for the use of the continental army of the said states, all the necessary articles suitable for the clothing of the army; to empower the commissary-general to seize stock and every kind of provision necessary for the army; and among other things, to enact laws *limiting the number of retailers of goods*, who were to be compelled to take licenses and execute bonds; that no person should sell by *wholesale except the importer, and then only to such licensed retailers*; and providing, that no person, not licensed, should be permitted to buy more than was necessary for their domestic use. An address was published by congress to the states, in which a hope was expressed, that these measures would be carried into execution as *secretly and expeditiously* as possible.

‡ January 22, 1778.

that an irruption be made into Canada, and investing themselves with authority, for the execution of this scheme under such general officers as congress should appoint, and to apply for such sums of money as they should think proper and requisite for the expedition, entirely departing from the established courtesy of consulting Washington.

The succeeding day was chosen for the appointment of these officers ; when the Marquis de la Fayette, (to cultivate whose favour, after long delay, congress on the first of December, had resolved it would be agreeable to them should be appointed to the command of a division,) Generals Conway and Stark were elected.

To use the language of La Fayette,* “among the general attacks upon the confidential friends of General Washington, for it would have been too unpopular to have indulged in open attacks upon him personally, in which his pretended incapacity had rendered the campaign in the south so different from that in the north, under a general conversant with European tactics, and the much-lamented influence of such men as Greene, Knox, and Hamilton, over the subjugated mind of the commander-in-chief, were artfully suggested and circulated. It had not been deemed expedient to include La Fayette ; — a better use, it was supposed, might be made of his growing popularity with the country, and of his correspondence with his friends in Europe.”

With this view, the selection of him had been made, though then but twenty years of age, and only six months in the country, to the command of a department attended with innumerable local difficulties, which no other than a native could surmount ; augmented by the character of the troops to whom the service must be confided, and depending principally on militia, from whom nothing but the per-

* Manuscript Memoir of General La Fayette.

sonal influence of the general or the most exact discipline could derive any essential aid.

The prospect of glory and separate command, it was supposed, would dazzle the youthful and ardent mind of La Fayette, and tempt him to become a partizan to their designs, while the real conduct of the enterprise would devolve on Conway.

The proceeding of the board of war towards Washington, on carrying this point, was in a similar spirit. The official letter from General Gates was transmitted to La Fayette, through the hands of Washington, without any explanation.

Obvious as was the purpose of this insult, the delicacy of Washington did not permit him, on the delivery of the packet to the marquis, to say more than this: — “Since it is to be so, I had rather it was you than any body else.”

“La Fayette, struck with the proffered opportunity of counteracting a measure, the tendency of which was not less injurious to the cause, than invidious to his paternal friend, under the pretence that it was necessary for him to visit congress to arrange the measures for the expedition, proceeded immediately to York Town,* and there omitted no arguments with Gates, and in his conferences with Laurens,

* An incident occurred at this place, perhaps too minute to be recorded. General Gates, soon after he was placed at the head of the board of war, thought fit to assume some appearance of state. His table was filled with plotting civilians, discontented officers, and favour-seeking foreigners; and never was this giddy man more happy than when he saw assembled around him a little court, basking under the sunshine of his new fortunes. His festive air and high hilarity, were contrasted with the sober decencies which surrounded Washington, and seemed appropriate to one who carried fortune in his train. It was during a scene of this kind that La Fayette arrived, when, after much gayety, finding the standing toast omitted, he requested the gentlemen again to be seated, and said, “You have forgotten our beloved commander-in-chief, General Washington, and the army.” This open avowal, by one whose influence with France was so well known, alarmed those who had calculated on her aid, through the assurances of Conway, and dispelled the dream.

the President of congress, to convince them that the whole charge of the military operations should be under the control of the commander-in-chief. Finding that his views were little in accordance with the intentions of the faction, he firmly resisted the temptations which were offered by the glory and facilities of an independent command, and stated that, considering himself as one of Washington's family, he could not accept the trust, except on the condition that he should act under Washington's immediate orders."

To this proposition the board of war were compelled to accede, and at the request of La Fayette, Baron de Kalb, a senior officer to Conway, was attached to the command.

La Fayette having rendered this important service to the country, after a conference with Washington, proceeded immediately to Albany; where, in pursuance of the instructions of the board of war, he ought to have found a body of two thousand five hundred men, besides militia, at the Cohoes, and all the means "of acting on the ice on lake Champlain and burning the British flotilla, whence he was to proceed to Montreal."

On his arrival at Albany, Schuyler, deeply affected with his recent conduct to Washington, generously volunteered to aid the marquis in the objects of his expedition, but the preparations being insufficient, the project was abandoned. La Fayette was rewarded for his alacrity by the thanks of congress, and retained this department through the winter; while Conway, having on the failure of this plan been thrown out of command, was ordered to repair to the post at Peekskill, under McDougall. Finding himself sinking rapidly in public esteem, as his intrigues became known, he resigned his commission, and then endeavoured to resume it. On the 27th May, 1778, General Gates wrote to congress stating, "I hope sir, congress will not think me importunate when I say, I wish that the only gentleman who has left France with the rank of colonel of foot,

should not be returned to his prince and nation in any other manner than such as becomes the gratitude, honour, and dignity of the United States ;” but the exhortation was too late ; for on the 28th of April, on a formal vote of congress of twenty-three members, four only voted in his favour.*

Washington soon reaped the fruits of his elevated forbearance : the party which had erected themselves against him, despairing of success, were contented with interposing petty obstacles and vexatious embarrassments ; which, though they added to the sufferings of the army, only served to call forth more signal evidences of the zeal of the officers, and virtue and patriotism of the troops, who all exclaimed, “No Washington — No Army !”

While this series of acts of a character by no means equivocal occurred, a tale had been artfully circulated at the seat of government, of designs in the army, inimical to the liberties of the republic. Direct efforts were stated to have been made to overturn the system of the confederation, and to invest the commander-in-chief with all the powers of government ; and it was insinuated that the leading officers in the army were in favour of this project, and that it required only time for its completion.

These calumnies, for there never existed a particle of evidence on which to sustain them, were cherished by the faction ; apprehensions for the national liberties were feigned ; the necessity of keeping a check on the army, and expelling from it individuals whom the faction both feared and hated, became with them a popular topic, and a resolution was pompously introduced and adopted by congress,† in which the friends of Washington were compelled from policy to concur, requiring oaths of allegiance to the United States,

* On a motion that his resignation be accepted. Affirmative — Lovell, Dana, Ellery, Sherman, Huntington, Wolcott, Duer, Morris, Seudder, Smith, Clingan, Plater, Carroll, Henry, S. Adams, Laurens, Drayton, Matthews, Hutson. Negative — Gerry, Chase, F. Lee, Bannister.

† February 3d, 1778.

and of abjuration of Great Britain, to be taken by all the officers in service of government, and certificates to be filed with congress of their compliance with this measure. Had a new motive or any instance of treason occurred ; had the cause of the nation suffered materially from any noted violation of public engagements, or any recent manifestation been given of a disposition to compromise the national interests, this harsh measure, of a nature always little efficacious in preserving fidelity, might have been resorted to ; but as a new pledge required from an army, who under more severe trials, and exposed to the greatest temptations, had sustained a character of the highest and most uncorrupted fealty to their country, it was regarded at the time, and must always be considered, as the unnecessary demand of a too jealous caution, or as an outrage on a patriotism and a devotion never surpassed. As a closing scene in the fate of this Cabal, a resolution was passed by congress, stating that "alarming consequences are likely to ensue, from a longer delay of appointing proper persons to fill the quarter-master-general's department ; that the committee at camp, in conjunction with General Washington, be authorized forthwith to make proper appointments." The arrangement of this department, as framed by the board of war was abandoned, and General Greene was appointed in place of Mifflin, who upon an inquiry being instituted preliminary to a court-martial, requested leave to resign.

General Gates, in the mean time, (every scheme of the board of war over which he had presided having been found impracticable,) was directed to take the command of the posts on the Hudson, with authority to call on the adjacent states for aid in fortifying and obstructing that river, but with a prudent proviso full of meaning, suggested by the result of Hamilton's important mission to him in the previous autumn, "that he be directed from time to time to *afford every assistance in his power, in forwarding the*

drafts and other reinforcements destined for the main army."

The country had now passed through the most trying period of its history; and when a true estimate is formed of its situation at that moment, the surrender at Saratoga, the event which established the United States among nations, must be regarded as the occurrence which portended to it the most serious calamities.

Until that time America had seen little else but disaster. She then began to triumph; and as the intelligence of this success spread over the country, the public mind became intoxicated, and even congress lost its balance.

This attempt to unveil the counsels of that secret conclave which doomed Washington to disgrace,—which, would, in all probability, have defeated the revolution, or if not, would have robbed America of the pride of boasting a native as her leader, has unavoidably been imperfect; but enough of truth has been gathered to indicate the path of inquiry.

When time shall give the whole of this eventful story, the historian will not forget to remark, among other incidents, that while Pennsylvania was chilled and dissatisfied, the votes of Maryland, of North Carolina and Georgia divided,—his native Virginia misrepresented,—the powerful influence of New-England marshalled under adverse leaders; that New-York, though her metropolis and her mountain passes were in the hands of the enemy,—her temporary seat of government in ashes, though just relieved from subjugation by the capitulation of Burgoyne,—thus dismembered, and dislocated, maintained all her constancy and all her firmness.

Justice to those patriots who resisted and ultimately defeated this Cabal, would seem to require that the persons who composed it should be indicated; but, as the removal of the commander-in-chief was never brought to a direct

question, and as the votes on several of the prominent acts which have been referred to, are not recorded, much must remain in uncertainty.

Among the friends of Washington, were to be remarked the manly sense, the practised wisdom, the unbending firmness of Robert Morris, detecting by his strong sagacity every intrigue of the opposition, and overcoming their obstinacy by his superior determination. There was also found Charles Carroll, whose high and generous constancy of character inspired confidence in his friends, and prevented the zeal of party from blinding those who were under its influence. There, also, the rich and varied powers of Gouverneur Morris were forever kept in play, surprising all around him by the fertility of his erratic genius. There was Duer, with stores of wit that never were exhausted, and a rich, vivid, and spontaneous eloquence that rose with every renewed effort, braving, defying, and disconcerting the hostile majority. There, also, were Boudinot of New-Jersey, Burke of North Carolina, Paca of Maryland, and others whose names are not distinguished.

Of the individuals who were believed to have controlled the measures of the Cabal, the Lees and the Adamses* have been indicated as the most conspicuous. As to the former, the allegation has been denied; and of the part taken by John Adams, who was nominated at the height of its influence a Commissioner to France, history is silent, and has directed its attention to Samuel Adams, whose early services, zeal, and proscription have imparted to his character a singular interest; but who, born with all the qualities to aid in subverting an established government, was devoid of those necessary to build one up.

Proceeding on the principle that all confidence is unsafe, he laboured to confine the powers of the confederation

* Letter of Edward Rutledge to Mr. Jay.--*Life of John Jay*, p. 25, vol. 2.

within the narrowest limits, and opposed with obstinacy every effort to enlarge them.

This spirit of indiscriminate distrust darkened all his counsels, and was combined with a fanaticism which disregarded experience, and undervalued human agency. Thus in the most alarming periods of the revolution, when the condition of the country ought to have unchained his mind, — while he cheered the hesitating with reiterated appeals to Providence,* he opposed long enlistments, from an apprehension of standing armies, and contended for a rotation in command, on the ground that if the precedent were once established, “no military chieftain could ever take a flight beyond the reach of vengeance.”

With these doctrines, he swayed for a time the councils of the congress of seventeen hundred and seventy-seven, which he characterized “as the smallest but truest congress they ever had;” and without, probably, any malevolence to Washington, or respect for Gates, he engaged warmly in the projects of the Cabal, to displace the former from the command and advance his rival.

* An instance of this kind is related of this more than ordinary man, who led on the bold by his courage, and stirred up the tranquil by his arts; and who though himself the victim of superstition, was not the less aware how deep its sources spring in the human breast. At a moment when congress was sitting disheartened and hesitating, the arrival of a vessel with military stores from France was announced. Availing himself of this intelligence, he arose from his seat, and exclaiming with extended arms — “It is a sign from Heaven! Providence, — Providence is on our side!” dissipated the doubts of those around him. With the same sublimated feeling, when an unlimited price was offered him by an agent of the king, he replied in a determined manner: “I trust I have long since made my peace with the King of Kings. No personal consideration shall induce me to abandon the righteous cause of my country. Tell Governor Gage ‘It is the advice of Samuel Adams to him to insult no longer the feelings of an exasperated people.’”

CHAPTER VIII.

[1778.]

THE events of the last campaign had indicated the necessity of more efficient measures for the organization of the army ; and congress, yielding to the earnest solicitation of Washington, now entered upon this duty. Before stating the measures which were adopted, a few preliminary remarks may be necessary.

Rarely were a people less prepared for arms than the American colonists at the commencement of the revolution. They had neither soldiers, generals, nor engineers ; neither the munitions* nor the knowledge of war ;—all were to be acquired by exertion and experience, and every thing to be surmounted by energy and fortitude.

Among the few individuals who had reaped military information in the war of seventeen hundred and fifty-six, Washington was the only American who had obtained an extensive reputation. Eminent as were the soldierly qualities which he there displayed, his experience was too limited to entitle him to the principal command ; and on the large scale on which the war was to be conducted, he had almost all its science to learn.

Philip Schuyler, known as Colonel Schuyler, was the only other member of the congress of seventeen hundred and seventy-five who had any pretensions to the character of a soldier ; the capacity in which he had previously served, had given him an accurate knowledge of the civil departments of an army, but beyond this, his attainments did not extend ; and whatever other information he possessed, was

* May 11, 1776, the lead was torn from the roofs of the Exchange and City Hall for bullets, and every article of brass taken from the houses.

the acquisition of an active mind, fruitful in resource, and of great practical energy.

The duty of organizing the military establishment was confided by congress to these two gentlemen.* The first object to which, after filling the general staff, congress directed their attention, was the organization of the militia. All the inhabitants of the colonies, fit for duty, were recommended to form military associations; one-fourth of whom were to be chosen minute men, distributed into battalions and companies, to be relieved by new drafts, after performing a tour of four months' duty; the field officers to be appointed by the conventions of the respective states. Such was the embryo of an army, destined to win the liberty of an extensive empire.

Of this kind of force General Washington was authorized to employ a body, not to exceed twenty-two thousand troops, in the vicinity of Boston; and five thousand more, under the command of General Lee, were directed to be mustered for the protection of New-York.

At an adjourned meeting of congress,† a new continental army was ordered to be enlisted for one year, by battalions, to be raised in the respective colonies, according to their numbers; and of these, the forces intended to be encamped near Boston, were to amount to twenty thousand men.

Powers were, at the same time, conferred on the commander-in-chief, of impressing whatever might be necessary for its use, and of calling forth, from time to time, portions of the reserve.

The enlistments, under this arrangement, gave little assurance of success in creating an efficient force. The spirit

* June 14, 1775. — Messrs. Deane, Cushing, and Hewes, were also of the committee.

† November 4, 1775.

of the people brought them rapidly into the field on an emergency ; but there were few of that order of men who would, from choice, endure the privations of a military life, augmented as they were by the defects of a new and very imperfect establishment.

The prejudices of the country were also strong against any thing in the shape of a regular army. In vain were the militia required to submit, while in service, to the articles of war. Both officers and men resisted every measure for the introduction of discipline ; and it will be remarked, as a strong indication of the prevailing jealousy of an exercise of power over the militia, that within a month after authorizing them to be called into service by the commander-in-chief, congress found it necessary, in compliance with public opinion, and at a time when they were waging a contest for their liberties with the greatest empire of Europe, to pass a resolution, that these powers were only to be exercised with the consent of the state authorities.*

In the winter of the ensuing year, measures were taken for more efficient arrangements : of these, the division of the colonies, into military departments, was among the first. Those north of Virginia composed the northern ; the remainder the southern ; while, from the desire of preserving the operations in that quarter distinct, that of Canada formed a third department.

On the arrival of the English troops near New-York, more vigorous measures were adopted. An order was issued for a levy of thirteen thousand eight hundred men to reinforce the army, a flying camp of ten thousand more was directed to be embodied in the Jerseys, and the general staff enlarged.

These were, however, all temporary expedients. The

* Dec. 7, 1775.

result of the contest on Long Island proved how little reliance could be placed on militia, for any other purpose than as transient auxiliaries ; and, although the exertions of their officers gave to particular corps discipline and system, yet for a general scale of connected operations, they were utterly inefficient. The letters of Washington are full of the most urgent solicitations for a permanent establishment, without which he felt that he was waging a hopeless contest, alike disastrous to the American cause, and fatal to his own reputation. In one instance, he avows, after enumerating the difficulties under which he laboured, "If I were called upon to declare upon oath whether the militia have been most serviceable or hurtful, on the whole, I should subscribe to the latter."

Experience did more to effect a change than the most cogent arguments ; and after a protracted discussion of a report from the Board of war, which had been elected in the preceding month of June, congress adopted a resolution* to raise eighty-eight battalions, to be enlisted for three years, or during the war, to be apportioned among the several states, giving a bounty to those who served to its close ; at the same time jealously providing that the appointment of all, except general officers, should remain with the states, though the commissions proceeded from congress, and confiding to the states the provision of arms and munitions for their respective quotas.

This resolution, in pursuance of the suggestion of the commander-in-chief, was followed by the introduction of more efficient articles of war.

At the close of the year,† the fears of congress extorted from them a resolution, investing Washington for a term of six months with general powers ; and their critical

* Sept. 16, 1776.

† December 27th, 1776.

situation reconciled parts of the country to those powers being carried into operation.*

But the progress of military discipline was slow : to define the duties of each station was not an easy task ; the exigencies of the army often excused the transition of the different departments from their proper spheres ; and even in the general staff, so prone was the disposition to question the authority of the commander-in-chief, that Washington found it necessary through the medium of General Greene, to obtain a declaration from congress, that it never was their intention that the commander-in-chief should be bound by the decision of a council of war.

Great accessions were made to the science of the army in the progress of the campaign of 1777. France gave us La Fayette, the young enthusiast of liberty, who here offered his first vows to that cause with which his name will forever be identified ; — the generous, the gallant, the gifted De Noailles — the accomplished soldier Du Portail — the unfortunate Custine — the warm-hearted and volatile Fleury — Du Plessis,† as modest as he was gallant, the

* Congress made a communication to the convention of New-York, to soften their feelings as to this measure. The consideration of it was postponed.

† "Whose gallant conduct," says Washington in a letter to congress, "at Brandywine, Germantown, and his distinguished services at Fort Mercer, where he united the offices of engineer and commandant of artillery entitle him to the particular notice of congress. Whose conduct at Red Bank commanded the highest applause, and who after the evacuation was determined upon, undertook as a volunteer, the hazardous operation of blowing up the magazine without the apparatus usual on such occasions. I must farther add that he possesses a degree of modesty not always found in men who perform brilliant actions. It is with pleasure that I recommend to congress to give him a brevet of lieutenant-colonel. I hope there will be no difficulty in antedating the brevet, that the recompense may more immediately follow the service which he has done."

inheritor of the virtues of his great ancestor* — the three brothers Armand — Ternant, afterwards ambassador from France, — and many others not less ardent for distinction.

Prussia gave us the veteran Steuben, previously the aid-de-camp of the great Frederic, and the founder of American tactics; and to Poland we owe Pulaski, who fell at Savannah, and the patriotic Kosciusko.

The services of these individuals were soon appreciated by the army; and those who survived the contest, retired from the country clothed with every mark of respect which an infant nation could confer.

But, in addition to these, crowds of mercenary adventurers flocked to the American standard, seeking bread and preferment, and indulging the most presumptuous and overweening pretensions. The embarrassments produced by this circumstance were many and serious; besides the disgust which was created in the minds of the American officers on finding themselves postponed to men who were generally their inferiors in character and talent, the army was constantly embroiled by a series of petty intrigues, having for their object the personal advancement of particular individuals.

This evil had been felt before the close of the first campaign; but the situation of Washington interposed considerations of delicacy as to his sentiments on this point being made public. They were, however, communicated to Colonel Hamilton, and within a short time after he had

* The Hugonot chief Philip Mornay du Plessis, of whose praise the French historians are full. To whom Voltaire devoted the choicest effort of his genius, and who is thus beautifully eulogized by Grotius, —

Nobilitas, animo elaro quam sanguine major
Res hominum solers noseere, resque Dei
Consilium prudens, divis faeundia linguae
Hic cum Morneo, contumulata jacent.

entered the family of the commander-in-chief, he addressed the following letter to Mr. Duer.

HAMILTON TO THE HON. WILLIAM DUER.

The bearer of this is Mr. Malmedi, a French gentleman of learning, abilities, and experience. I believe he thinks himself entitled to preferment, and comes to congress for that purpose.

At the recommendation of General Lee, he was made brigadier-general by the state of Rhode-Island, and filled the station to the satisfaction of his employers, as appears by a letter from Governor Cock, speaking of him in the highest terms of approbation.

This had led him to hope that he would be adopted by the continent on an equal footing. But in this he will no doubt be mistaken, as there are many insuperable objections to such a measure.

Among others, it would tend to raise the expectations of the Frenchmen, in general already too high, to a pitch which it would be impossible to gratify or endure. It might not, however, be amiss to do whatever propriety would warrant to keep him in good humour, as he is a man of sense and merit.

I think policy would justify the advancing him a step higher than his former continental rank.

Congress, in the beginning, went upon a very injudicious plan with respect to Frenchmen. To every adventurer that came, without even the shadow of credentials, they gave the rank of field officers. This circumstance seconding the aspiring disposition natural to those people, carried the expectations of those who really had any pretensions to the character of officers, to such a length, that exceeded all the bounds of moderation. As it was impossible to pursue this impolitic plan, the congress have begun to retrench their

excessive liberality; and the consequence has been universal disgust and discontent.

It would perhaps be injurious, as the French are much addicted to national punctilio, to run into the opposite extreme to that first embraced, and by that mean create a general clamor and dissatisfaction. Policy suggests the propriety of discriminating a few of the most deserving, and endeavouring to keep them in temper, even by gratifying them beyond what they can reasonably pretend to. This will enable us to shake off the despicable part with safety, and to turn a deaf ear to the exorbitant demands of the many. It will be easily believed in France that their want of merit occasioned their want of success, from the extraordinary marks of favour that have been conferred on others; whereas, the united voice of complaint from the whole, might make ill impressions in their own country, which it is not our interest should exist.

We are already greatly embarrassed with the Frenchmen among us, and from the genius of the people, shall continue to be so. It were to be wished that our agents in France, instead of courting them to come out, were instructed to give no encouragement, but where they could not help it; that is, where applications were made to them by persons countenanced and supported by great men whom it would be impolitic to disoblige. Be assured, sir, we shall never be able to satisfy them, and they can be of no use to us, at least for some time. Their ignorance of our language, of the disposition of the people, the resources and deficiencies of the country, their own habits and tempers, — all these are disqualifications that put it out of their power to be of real use or service to us. You will consider what I have said as entirely my own sentiments, and believe me to be with regard,

Sir, your most humble servant,

A. HAMILTON.

The remonstrances which were made on this subject received little consideration ; and it was soon discovered to be the policy of the Cabal to foster these men ; who, finding Washington unwilling to promote their views at the sacrifice of the public interests, became parties and active instruments of a faction, by which they had been led to indulge the most sanguine expectations.

Amid the various objects of moment which occupied his mind, Washington's temper could ill brook the importunities with which he was continually beset ; and he was occasionally drawn into expressions of opinion which were readily seized upon, and made the subject of the most ungenerous comments.

Another source of difficulty, and one productive of the most serious inconveniences, especially when viewed in connexion with the preceding topic, was the imperfect condition of the regiments.

The field officers in commission were so numerous, that adequate commands were in vain sought to be provided for them. It became necessary to combine selections from different corps ; whence arose another difficulty, — the appointment of officers from one state, to the command of the troops of another.

To remedy these defects — to devise a plan for the reduction of the regiments — to regulate rank, and to introduce system into the civil departments of the army, were the first objects which the commander-in-chief desired to accomplish, and which he pressed upon the attention of congress with unremitting solicitude.

To aid these designs, within a short time after the army had taken up their winter quarters,* a committee of five members of congress was appointed to proceed to Valley Forge, and confer with the General.

* January 11, 1778.

Soon after their arrival in camp, on the twenty-eighth of January, 1778, a paper was submitted to the committee, giving a general outline of the defects in, and proposed amendments to, the existing arrangements. This production was digested with great labour, and bears the marks of the most studied precision of language, and of the most careful arrangement of its parts.

From two successive drafts in his hand-writing, on which are minute notes of reference for information to the heads of the different departments of the army, it is manifestly the work of Colonel Hamilton; a duty the more readily imposed upon him, from his having cultivated every opportunity which the society of the foreign officers gave him, of adding a knowledge of the most approved innovations of modern science, to those principles which previous research and a strong military talent had led him to adopt.

The primary measure suggested in this plan, was the half-pay and pensionary establishment; a measure strongly indicated by principles of justice, and by the numerous resignations, and “more frequent importunities for permission to resign, and from some officers of the greatest merit.”

This is followed by suggestions of the most feasible mode of completing the regiments, and altering their establishment, and a sketch of the existing condition of the army — of the military resources of the different states, and a minute examination of the situation of each branch of the service, in its civil, military, and medical establishment; a new organization of it into eighty battalions* was proposed, and suggestions made, for correcting the various abuses by which it was so much embarrassed.

This plan was accepted by the committee, reported with some alterations, approved by congress, and became the basis of the military system of the revolution. One propo-

* To compose a force of forty thousand and twenty rank and file.

sition alone, that of the half-pay, was attended with great difficulty. After various amendments and votes, half-pay for seven years was granted, excluding the officers while they held any office of profit, and limiting the general officers to the half-pay of colonels; an arrangement which was afterwards stripped of its more objectionable features, and half-pay for life established; and on the twenty-seventh of May the new army establishment was created.

But the success of the efforts to restore a discipline, chiefly depended on the conduct of the Quarter-master-general's department, which had now been placed on a better basis; for while the soldiers could, with justice, reproach their officers with a non-compliance with their engagements, subordination was hopeless. This object was at last happily attained.

It has been previously remarked, that the committee of congress had expressed a strong censure upon the administration of that department for a long time past, and "pointed to the selection of a man of approved abilities and extensive capacity at the head of that establishment," as the only mean of restoring it to order and regularity. After frequent solicitations from Washington and other influential persons, General Greene, with great reluctance, consented to accept the appointment. A new plan for this department was framed, instead of the four branches into which it had been subdivided, without any due subordination. One Quarter-master-general and two Assistants were recommended. On the twenty-eighth of January, 1778, General Schuyler was proposed to congress by the committee at camp, as Commissary-general, and his appointment was ardently desired by Washington; but the party of Gates was against him. At the instance of the same committee, Jeremiah Wadsworth, a man of great vigour, talent, and independence of character was appointed to that place. Concert with the general staff ensued; and though

at an immense expense, the soldiers were in a measure secured from the recurrence of those evils which had been so long and vainly deplored.

An important result was also at this time attained by the adoption of a new plan of an Inspectorship, to which office the Baron Steuben had recently been appointed.

The introduction of a new system of tactics was soon perceived in the improved discipline of the army, in the control of the detached commands, and in the regulation of the jarring duties of the officers.

This measure was, in its outset, not free from difficulties. The undefined duties of this station gave rise to the greatest dissatisfaction among the officers, and continued embarrassment to the commander-in-chief, and indicated the necessity of retrenching the authority which, in their jealousy of General Washington, and from a desire to lavish on their favourite extraordinary powers, the hostile party had conferred upon Conway.

To effect this object in a manner which would avoid compromising the General, Colonel Hamilton addressed the following letter to his friend Mr. Duer :

HAMILTON TO DUER.

Head Quarters.

DEAR SIR :

I take the liberty to trouble you with a few hints on a matter of some importance. Baron Steuben, who will be the bearer of this, waits on Congress to have his office arranged upon some decisive and permanent footing. It will not be amiss to be on your guard. The Baron is a gentleman for whom I have a particular esteem, and whose zeal, intelligence, and success, the consequence of both, entitle him to the greatest credit. But I am apprehensive, with all his good qualities, a fondness for power and importance, natural to every man, may lead him to wish for more ex-

tensive prerogatives in his department, than it will be for the good of the service to grant. I should be sorry to excite any prejudice against him on this account ; perhaps I may be mistaken in my conjecture. The caution I give will do no harm, if I am ; if I am not, it may be useful. In either case, the Baron deserves to be considered as a valuable man, and treated with all the deference which good policy will warrant.

On the first institution of this office, the General allowed him to exercise more ample powers than would be proper for a continuance. They were necessary in the commencement ; to put things in a train, with a degree of despatch which the exigency of our affairs required ; but it has been necessary to restrain them, even earlier than was intended. The novelty of the office excited questions about its boundaries ; the extent of its operations alarmed the officers of every rank for their own rights. Their jealousies and discontents were rising fast to a height that threatened to overturn the whole plan. It became necessary to apply a remedy. The General has delineated the functions of the inspectorship in general orders, a copy of which will be sent to congress. The plan is good, and satisfactory to the army in general.

It may be improved, but it will be unsafe to deviate essentially from it. It is, of course, the General's intention that whatever regulations are adopted by him, should undergo the revision, and receive the sanction of congress ; but it is indispensable, in the present state of our army, that he should have the power, from time to time, to introduce and authorize the reformatations necessary in our system. It is a work which must be done by occasional and gradual steps, and ought to be entrusted to a person on the spot, who is thoroughly acquainted with all our defects, and has judgment sufficient to adopt the progressive remedies they require. The plan established by congress, on a report of

the Board of war, when Conway was appointed, appears to me exceptionable in many respects. It makes the inspector independent of the commander-in-chief; confers powers which would produce universal opposition in the army, and, by making the previous concurrence of the Board of war requisite to the introduction of every regulation which should be found necessary, opens such a continual source of delay as would defeat the usefulness of the institution. Let the commander-in-chief introduce, and the legislature afterwards ratify or reject, as they shall think proper. Perhaps you will not differ much from me, when I suppose, that so far as relates to the Board of war, the former scheme was a *brat of faction*, and therefore ought to be renounced.

There is one thing which the Baron has much at heart, which, in good policy, he can by no means be indulged in: — it is the power of enforcing that part of discipline, which we understand by subordination, or an obedience to orders. This power can only be properly lodged with the commander-in-chief, and would inflame the whole army if put into other hands. Each captain is vested with it in his company, — each colonel in his regiment, — each general in his particular command, — and the commander-in-chief in the whole.

When I began this letter, I did not intend to meddle with any other subject than the Inspectorship; but one just comes into my head, which appears to me of no small importance. The goodness or force of an army depends as much, perhaps more, on the composition of the corps which form it, as on its collective number. The composition is good or bad, not only according to the quality of the men, but in proportion to the completeness or incompleteness of a corps in respect to numbers. A regiment, for instance, with a full complement of officers, and fifty or sixty men, is not half so good as a company with the same number of men. A colonel will look upon such a command as un-

worthy his ambition, and will neglect and despise it ; — a captain would pride himself in it, and take all the pains in his power to bring it to perfection. In one case, we shall see a total relaxation of discipline, and negligence of every thing that constitutes military excellence ; on the other, there will be attention, energy, and every thing that can be wished. Opinion, whether well or ill founded, is the governing principle of human affairs. A corps much below its establishment, comparing what it is, with what it ought to be, loses all confidence in itself, and the whole army loses that confidence and emulation which are essential to success. These, and a thousand other things that will occur to you, make it evident, that the most important advantages, attend the having complete corps, and proportional disadvantages, the reverse. Ten thousand men, distributed into twenty imperfect regiments, will not have the efficiency of the same number, in half the number of regiments. The fact is, with respect to the American army, that the want of discipline, and other defects we labour under, are as much owing to the skeleton state of our regiments, as to any other cause. — What then ?

Have we any prospect of filling our regiments ? My opinion is, that we have nearly arrived to our ne plus ultra. If so, we ought to reduce the number of corps, and give them that substance and consistency which they want, by incorporating them together, so as to bring them near their establishment. By this measure, the army would be infinitely improved, and the state would be saved the expense of maintaining a number of superfluous officers.

In the present condition of our regiments, they are incapable even of performing their common exercises without joining two or more together, — an expedient reluctantly submitted to by those officers who see themselves made second in command of a battalion, instead of first, as their com-

mission imports, which happens to every younger colonel whose regiment is united with that of an elder.

What would be the inconveniences, while the officers who remain in command, and who might be selected from the others on account of superior merit, would applaud themselves in the preference given them, and rejoice at a change which confers such additional consequence on themselves?

Those who should be excluded by the measure, would return home discontented, and make a noise, which would soon subside and be forgotten among matters of greater moment. To quiet them still more effectually, if it should be thought necessary, they might be put upon half-pay for a certain time.

If on considering this matter, you should agree with me in sentiment, it were to be wished the scheme could be immediately adopted, while the arrangement now in hand is still unexecuted. If it is made, it will be rather inconvenient immediately after to unhinge and throw the whole system again afloat.

When you determined on your last arrangement, you did not know what success the different states might have had in drafting and recruiting. It would then have been improper to reduce the number of corps, as proposed. We have now seen their success; we have no prospect of seeing the regiments filled; — we should reduce them.

Believe me to be, with great esteem and regard,

Dear sir, your obedient servant,

A. HAMILTON.

The measures here suggested were frequently brought before the consideration of congress, and various steps were taken to remedy the evil; but the reduction of the army, always difficult and embarrassing, especially in popular governments, required great deliberation in a war where too

often the caprices of individuals were unavoidably more consulted, than the public interest.

The proposed limitation of the office of Inspector-general was made, and among his papers a draft of a plan for that department of the army, exists in Hamilton's hand-writing. It was proposed to congress by General Washington, in lieu of the system which had been framed in 1777, and was adopted in part on the fifth of May, 1778.

This plan proposed the establishment of one inspector-general, six deputy inspector-generals, and one inspector to each brigade; defined the duties of the office, rendering it subordinate to congress, to the board of war, and to the commander-in-chief, at the head of which it was proposed to place Baron Steuben, and also to introduce into it General Cadwallader and Colonel Fleming. Of the former of whom, it is remarked in a letter from Washington, "that he is a military genius, of a decisive and independent spirit, properly impressed with the necessity of order and discipline, and of sufficient vigour to enforce it. He would soon perfect himself in the practical part, and be fit to succeed to the first place in the department." Of Colonel Fleming, who has been previously mentioned as the early instructor of Hamilton, it is observed, "he is an excellent disciplinarian, and from long practice in the British army, has acquired the necessary knowledge." The military arrangements were soon after improved, by the better organization of the armoury department, and measures taken connected with the corps of cavalry, at the head of which it was subsequently* proposed to place General Cadwallader.

In effecting the contemplated change in the inspector-general's department, "the fondness for importance," of which Hamilton speaks, in his letter to Mr. Duer, as a trait of Steuben, was the source of many a disquietude, for the

* September 7th, 1778.

Baron was too valuable to be offended, and too sensitive to be easily satisfied.

This petted veteran has been much misunderstood. He has been regarded as the type of a race now gone by. It has been supposed that his mind was ever in the drill, that he considered mankind as born for arms, and believed that the business of society was war. But his character rose far above that of a mere soldier. While in Paris, he was invited by the Count St. Germain to visit America, as the General most competent to organize an army. He arrived in seventy-seven; and of the extent and value of his services, the conduct of the troops at Monmouth is the best commentary. His exertions were so successful, that at the close of the war few countries could boast a better disciplined or more serviceable corps than the American army. That he stood high in the favour of the great Frederick, is a proof that he was more than an ordinary man. His information was various, his intellect active and comprehensive, his temper energetic and decisive, his knowledge of men great, and in the intercourse of life he showed himself an accomplished gentleman. His disposition being generous and jovial, and his conversation various and playful, he was fond of society, of which he was a favourite, where a little proneness to parade placed him sometimes too much in advance. But his character had in it nothing repulsive or selfish; and amidst all his imprudences, there shone forth many a gleam of the warmest benevolence. Of Hamilton he became exceedingly fond, who repaid this preference by every office of friendship. Aware of his profusion, he became the volunteer trustee of his funds, and often would the old General, smiling, declare — “the Secretary of the Treasury is my banker — my Hamilton takes care of me, when he cannot take care of himself.”

Another subject was at this time taken into serious con-

sideration, — the policy to be adopted towards the numerous Indians who threatened the frontier of the republic.

The reluctance of the United States to employ them as auxiliaries, is among the most gratifying incidents in the early history of the Revolution. But this disposition was at last changed by the different policy of the enemy; and in a report framed by Mr. Gouverneur Morris,* stating “that unless they were employed with them, they would be employed against them,” suggesting “that there is great reason to believe that the novelty of their appearance in the field, the circumstances of horror and affright which attend their attack, will have a great effect upon the minds of men wholly unacquainted with such an enemy,” it is proposed that the Southern Indians should be embodied under General Gist, and the Oneidas employed as light troops — among whom Louis, a chief of considerable talent, was soon after commissioned as colonel, and served with singular fidelity throughout the war.

The pacific conduct of a large portion of the Mohawks, had been chiefly attributable to General Schuyler. In the reign of Queen Anne, his ancestor had been employed as superintendent over this savage people, and he became so popular, that his portrait was preserved among them with the greatest care, and brought out at every important council they held. This influence descended in the family; and during the fiercest moments of the contest, instances and messages of mutual kindness occurred. The wild imaginative sensibility of this race clothed the person of Schuyler with an almost supernatural sacredness; and it is a remarkable fact, that on the very day on which Miss McCrea was murdered, his wife and second daughter passed these hordes unmolested. Even until the close of Schuyler’s life, parties are remembered to have been seen encamping near his

* February 20th, 1778.

residence at Albany, preferring confident claims upon his bounty, indulging in mimic representations of their savage sports, and reminding him that he was descended from their "Great Father Queedir."

The rejection by congress of the conciliatory bills which had been proposed by the British government, in consequence of the state of our negotiations at Paris, was followed by the arrival of Mr. Deane, with copies of the treaties which had been concluded with France the preceding winter.

The acknowledgement of our independence by the rival of England, and the assurances of aid which were given, was an event which, after the many delays that had been interposed, elevated the hopes of the nation to the highest point. Copies of the treaties were circulated by order of congress — a general thanksgiving was appointed — and to add to the effect, the army of Washington celebrated with military pomp the alliance of the nations.

The spirit of exultation which followed the capture of Burgoyne, though checked by the subsequent reverses of the year, and by the distresses of the army through the winter, again revived; and for a moment the country indulged in the fond hope that their sufferings were now to end.

The provident mind of Washington took immediate alarm, which a letter drawn up by Colonel Hamilton, in reply to General Greene, strongly depicts.

WASHINGTON TO GREENE.

In answer to your favour of the third, I give it clearly as my opinion, that no change has happened in our affairs, which will justify the least relaxation in any of our military preparations, and consequently, that the provisions you have been, and are making in your department, ought to be continued in their fullest vigour and extent.

The intelligence from abroad is extremely favourable, and affords us an earnest of success, with proper management, but there is nothing in it that can make it prudent to depart in the smallest degree from the exertion we should otherwise have made. There may still be business enough to call out our most strenuous efforts. Britain is a country full of resources. Her interest and connexions in Europe are great; an union within, under a popular administration, which a principle of common danger may produce, would render her capable of great internal exertions.

The storm which now seems to be rising in Europe may subside, and a compromise ensue between the contending powers, from which a change in the system may result, very advantageous to the views of our enemies. All these are events which may happen; and which, if there were no other considerations, would make it unwise to suffer ourselves to be lulled into security, or to remit any endeavours that may serve to put our military affairs upon the most respectable footing possible.

But it is also to be remembered, that the British army in America is still very considerable; and if collected, would be formidable to all the force we should be able to oppose to it. In all probability, it will either be withdrawn or assembled at one point, for some vigorous and enterprising push, if it were only to make the way for a negotiation. The former is more to be wished than expected. British pride would never submit to it, but in the last extremity; and perhaps we should flatter ourselves too much, to suppose that extremity exists. If the latter should be the case, remissness in our present preparations might be fatal; or at any rate, could not fail to have a very injurious influence. The enemy might obtain successes which would have a most unhappy operation upon the current of our sentiments at home, and upon the progress of our negotiations and growing friendships abroad.

If we had nothing to fear from any offensive operations of the enemy, policy may require very extensive and important offensive operations on our part, which will make it necessary we should be prepared in the amplest manner at all points.

In a word, in what manner so ever the remainder of the contest is to be prosecuted, whether it is to depend upon fighting or negotiation, a powerful army, well furnished with every apparatus of war, will put it in our power to meet all contingencies, with confidence and advantage, and to pursue the true interests of these States, through any combination of circumstances that shall present itself, with firmness and decision.

Whether any or what change may happen in the local situation of the army, in the approaching campaign, or what disposition in your department may be requisite in consequence, are matters which, for particular reasons, I cannot yet determine. A council will soon be held, in which will be decided a general plan of operations for the army. When this is done, you will receive your instructions accordingly: in the mean time, you will proceed in the plan already on foot. With great esteem, I am, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

G. W.

These sentiments were repeatedly urged upon congress by the commander-in-chief, and the utmost efforts were made to check the growth of that supineness which, cherished by the false expectations of the country, threatened the most alarming consequences.

Within a short time after the date of this letter, a negotiation was again opened for the exchange of prisoners.

The report of the board of war had shown that there were in captivity, at the commencement of the year, nearly seventeen hundred men.

The treatment they received excited the utmost indignation. During the summer the privates had been crowded into sugar houses, deprived of their clothing, kept on short allowances, and debarred the privileges of being visited by an American commissary. During the winter, both officers and men were confined in the provost guard, or in prison-ships, enduring unparalleled rigour, and rapidly sinking under privations and disease.

These circumstances operated strongly on the feelings of the army. The negotiations which had failed were renewed, and, with the sanction of congress, it was determined to proceed to an exchange, without reference to certain controverted points. With this view, on the fourth of June Washington addressed the following letter to Colonel Hamilton, paying him the gratifying compliment of discretionary powers.

“SIR,

“Mr. Loring having been sent by Sir Henry Clinton to meet Mr. Boudinot, or any other person appointed by me for the purpose of effecting an exchange of prisoners, I have therefore to desire you (Mr. Boudinot being absent) to hear any proposals Mr. Loring may have to offer on this subject, and to do definitively whatever may be necessary towards the execution of a general exchange of prisoners; and I do hereby assure you, that your proceedings in this instance will be ratified by me.

G. WASHINGTON.

Lt. Col. Hamilton.

The mission was in part successful, and an exchange of the prisoners in Philadelphia followed.

CHAPTER IX.

[1778.]

WHILE the United States, strengthened by an alliance with France, were indulging the most sanguine anticipations of success, the British councils were full of embarrassment and uncertainty. Stimulated by hatred of their great rival, they found their generous people again rushing forward to lavish their treasures, and expend their blood in a cause which the national sentiment had at first condemned; but how to achieve their object, or what new system of warfare to adopt, which could promise a more favourable result, was the great, the perplexing question.

It had been found that New-England was fully able to cope with any aggression that might be made upon her. The efforts in New-York, though more successful, had secured a station for one army, but had resulted in the capture of another. The campaign of the Jerseys had been little more than a mere marauding inroad, and the possession of Philadelphia, after vast losses, without weakening the confidence of the Americans in their eventual success, had placed their enemy in a position to extricate themselves from which, seemed to be the great object of solicitude. Results, the obvious consequences of this mad attempt to subjugate a people, who must be divided and debased before they can be conquered, were attributed to the incapacity of Sir William Howe; and, in the idle hope that a new leader of her armies might better reward the efforts of the nation, the command was confided to Sir Henry Clinton.

The intelligence that a French armament was destined to America, confirmed the purpose which had long been enter-

tained of surrendering the prize of the last campaign, and concentrating the whole strength at New-York, there to await such a plan of operations as future events should develope.

The increased and augmenting force of the Americans, rendered their position in a city without works, and incapable of being fortified, extremely perilous. Subsistence for the army becoming daily more difficult of attainment, which a blockade of the Delaware, by a French fleet, would entirely intercept, and the effective strength which on its embarkation in the preceding year had reached nearly eighteen thousand men, notwithstanding the reinforcements in the autumn, was reduced by losses and desertions to little more than eleven thousand.

What would be the future operations of the enemy, became now the interesting problem with the Americans. By many it was supposed that the threatened danger of their West India possessions would be seized, as a pretext to withdraw from the United States, which was countenanced by the evacuation of the Fort's Lee* and Washington, and by the reduced number of the troops in New-York, now amounting only to six thousand three hundred men. By others, an attempt on the Highlands was expected; but this belief, the inadequacy of the force in Canada, necessary to co-operate, did not justify: Washington meanwhile had ascertained† their purposes, and hoped to crush them by a decisive blow.

* May 21st, 1778.

† The most active surveillance was kept up at this time as to the movements of the British army. This duty was especially confided to Captain Allan McLane, who rendered invaluable services by his zeal, intelligence, and activity. The following is a letter addressed to him by Colonel Laurens.

Head-Quarters, May 26th, 1778.

SIR:

I have received your letter and communicated its contents to his excellency. Intelligence becomes every moment more interesting. The grand fact of the

The British army broke up from their encampment on the eighteenth of June, and proceeding down the Delaware, landed in New-Jersey, at Gloucester, and on the same day marched to Haddonsfield. As soon as this information reached head-quarters, the commander-in-chief having detached General Dickinson to collect the Jersey militia, who had received orders from Governor Livingston, always zealous and on the alert, to hold themselves in immediate readiness, and having commanded General Maxwell to follow the route of the enemy, convened a council of war to decide upon the plan of operations. At this council it was determined by a majority of its members to avoid either a general or partial engagement in opposition to the sentiments of Greene, Wayne and Cadwallader, who urged the opinion, that their true policy was to harass the enemy on their retreat, and without an unnecessary exposure of the army to seize the first opportunity of bringing on an engagement.

The opinion of General Lee, who was particularly strenuous in opposing an attack, and whose reputation for military experience gave it a preponderating weight, caused

enemy's design to evacuate the city being ascertained, no pains should be spared to discover, if possible, the precise moment when the event is to take place, and the route which their army will pursue; whether they mean to cross the Delaware and march through Jersey, or cross the Schuylkill and march down to Chester, to embark there, on account of the tedious navigation through the *chevaux-de-frize*, and because they may cover their real march by a pretended attempt on this army. Endeavour to discover the number of transports, their situation on the river; as well as that of the ships-of-war. whether the horses that have been embarked were really dragoon horses, or only those that are superfluous, as their heavy artillery and baggage is embarked, and they would march as light as possible through Jerseys, provided they go that way. What are the bridge-boats that you speak of? do you mean those that may be put together for facilitating the embarkation on board the transports? His excellency desires if you have sufficient ground for suspecting —, that you will immediately secure them and send them to camp."

great offence to the personal friends of Washington. He not only urged the impolicy of active operations, but endeavoured to sustain it on grounds extremely mortifying to the pride of the American army.

Colonel Hamilton, whose ardour for battle was fully supported by a sense of duty, in an eulogium which he pronounced upon General Greene, thus expressed himself in reference to this determination.

“I forbear to lift the veil from off those impotent councils, which by a formal vote had decreed an undisturbed passage to an enemy retiring from the fairest fruits of his victories, to seek an asylum from impending danger, disheartened by retreat, dispirited by desertion, broken by fatigue ; — retreating through woods, defiles, and morasses, in which his discipline was useless, in the face of an army superior in numbers, elated by pursuit, and ardent to signalize their courage. ’Tis enough for the honour of Greene to say, that he left nothing unessayed to avert and to frustrate so degrading a resolution ; and it was happy for America, that the man whose reputation could not be wounded without wounding the cause of his country, had the noble fortitude to rescue himself and the army he commanded from the disgrace with which they were both menaced, by *the characteristic imbecility of a council of war.*”

The first movements of Sir Henry Clinton, rendering it doubtful which course he proposed to take, Washington, embarrassed by the decision of the council, and yet unwilling, to assume the responsibility of precipitating an engagement, took a circuitous route, by which he reached Hopewell, a place about five miles from Princeton, about noon of the twenty-third of June, where he halted until the morning of the twenty-fifth, having detached a small force under Arnold to take possession of Philadelphia. Meanwhile the enemy, with Dickinson and Maxwell harassing their left, and General Cadwallader and Colonel Morgan annoying their rear

and right flank, gained the vicinity of Allentown. A letter written by Hamilton, by the orders of General Washington, to Cadwallader, from this point, explains the delay of the army, which has been the subject of animadversion.

“DEAR SIR,

“I have just received yours this day from the Draw Bridge. The army marched this morning to this place. It was my intention to have taken post near Princeton; but finding the enemy are dilatory in advancing, I am doubtful of the propriety of proceeding any farther, till their intention is ascertained. I wish you to inform me more particularly of the obstructions which have been thrown in their way, that I may be better able to judge whether their delay is owing to necessity or choice. Any circumstance that may serve to throw light upon this question, I shall be obliged to you for, as it is of very great importance. If their delay is voluntary, it argues a design to draw us into a general action, and proves that they consider this to be a desirable event. They may, perhaps, wish to draw us off from the Delaware, far to the left, and then by a rapid movement gain our right flank and rear.

“I should be glad of your sentiments fully as to their probable designs, and the conduct which it will be most proper for us to observe in consequence. You will be pleased to continue to advise me punctually of every movement and appearance of the enemy.

“Let me remind you of mentioning always the hour at which you write, which is of the greatest moment.”

While the army was at this post, and Sir Henry Clinton was balancing between the route to Staten Island, which would expose him to the danger of crossing the Raritan with an army in his rear, and that which, leading to Amboy by way of Monmouth, gave him the advantage, if necessary, of

entrenching himself on the high grounds of Middletown, Washington called a second council of general officers, in which, supported by Greene, Wayne, and La Fayette, he urged the policy of pursuing the enemy, and bringing on an engagement before they could reach the eminences in their front.

The former opinion, by the overruling influence of Lee, still prevailed; and Washington was thus again placed in the dilemma, either of assuming the responsibility of an attack, or of subjecting himself to the imputation of pusillanimously sacrificing the opportunity, which the advantage of the ground, and his superior force seemed to promise of a decisive victory. As soon as the council had broken up, Colonel Hamilton, anxious for the fame of his chief, and fearing that he might yield to the perplexity of his situation, called upon General Greene, and urged him to unite with him in pressing Washington to force an engagement. As they approached the General, sitting in his tent, he arose, and said, "Gentlemen, I anticipate the object of your visit; — you wish me to fight." Greene and Hamilton then recapitulated the reasons which had been advanced in the council; avowing it as their opinion, that if the British were suffered to retreat unmolested, they were disgraced. — Washington concurred, and an attack was decided upon. Unable to induce the council to recede from their decision, he succeeded in obtaining their assent to the detachment of fifteen hundred men, under General Scott, to join the corps on the left flank of the enemy. Even the strength of this detachment was a subject of controversy; but the lion-hearted Wayne, firmly resisting the idea of inactivity, refused to sign the resolutions of the council, and the point was ultimately carried.

General Washington determined to take decisive measures. In pursuance of this purpose, Wayne was sent forward with a thousand men to join the advanced corps,

now exceeding four thousand troops. The strength of this body rendering it a command proper for a Major General, and Lee yielding his priority, La Fayette was assigned to it by Washington, with instructions to Colonel Hamilton to accompany him, and aid in the execution of their design.

The orders pointed strongly to the junction of this detachment, with the troops under Scott, to harass the enemy, impede their march, and if possible bring on an engagement.

“As the detachment,” observes the Marquis, “began to march, Lee, hearing that his concession of the command was viewed with surprise, came up to La Fayette, and stating his feelings, said that to him he confided his honour.” The Marquis, too generous to resist this appeal, assured him, that if no action occurred that day, and General Lee should come out with the next detachment, that he would yield him the command.

Meanwhile the advanced detachment pushed forward to Cranberry, from whence Hamilton writes on the twenty-fifth, confirming the information that the enemy had filed off from Allentown, to the heights of Monmouth, the position it had been apprehended they would attain, and says, “I recommend to you to move towards this place as soon as the convenience of your men will permit. I am told that Colonel Morgan is on the enemy’s right flank:—we had a slight skirmish with their rear this forenoon, on the Monmouth road, leading from Allentown.” On the twenty-sixth, he writes to General Washington, who had moved forward on the evening of the twenty-fifth, and arrived at Cranberry next morning.

HAMILTON TO WASHINGTON.

Robins’ Tavern, 8 miles from Allentown, 12 o’clock.

“SIR,

“We have halted the troops at this place, eight miles from

Allentown. The enemy, by our last reports, were four miles from this, and had passed the road which turns off towards South Amboy, which determines their route towards Shrewsbury. Our reason for halting is, the extreme distress of the troops for want of provisions. General Wayne's detachment is almost starving, and seem both unwilling and unable to march till they are supplied. If we do not receive an immediate supply, the whole purpose of our detachment must be frustrated.

"On my arrival at Cranberry last evening, I proceeded, by desire of General the Marquis, immediately to Hyde's Town and Allentown, to take measures for co-operating with the different parts of the detachments, and to find what was doing to procure intelligence. I found every precaution neglected;—no horse was near the enemy, or could be heard of till late in the morning; so that before we could send out parties, and get the necessary information, they were in full march, and as they have marched pretty expeditiously, we should not be able to come up with them during the day, even if we did not suffer the impediment we do on the score of provisions.

"We are entirely at a loss where the army is, which is no inconsiderable check to our enterprise. If the army is wholly out of supporting distance, we risk the total loss of the detachment in making an attack. If the army will countenance us, we may do something clever. We feel our personal honour, as well as the honour of the army and the good of the service, interested, and are heartily desirous to attempt whatever the disposition of our men will second, and prudence authorize. It is evident, the enemy wish to avoid, not to engage us. An officer is just come in, who informs he left the enemy's force near five miles off, still in march. To ascertain more fully their route, I have ordered a fresh party on their left, and towards the head of their column. They have three brigades in rear of their baggage."

In the after part of the same day he again writes to General Washington, who, at the head of the main body, was detained at Cranberry by a heavy storm.

HAMILTON TO WASHINGTON.

“SIR,

“The result of what I have seen and heard respecting the enemy is, that they have encamped with their van a little beyond Monmouth Court-House, and their rear at Manalaps river, about seven miles from this place. Their march to-day has been very judiciously conducted; their baggage in front, and their flying army in the rear, with a rear guard of one thousand men about four hundred paces from the main body.

To attack them in this situation, without being supported by the whole army, would be folly in the extreme. If it should be thought advisable to give the necessary support, the army can move to some position near the enemy's left flank, which would put them in a very awkward situation, with so respectable a body in their rear, and would put it out of their power to turn either flank, should they be so disposed. Their left is strongly posted; and I am told their right is also. By some accounts, one part of his army lies in the road leading from the Monmouth road to South Amboy. It is not improbable that South Amboy may still be the object. I had written thus far when your letter to the Marquis arrived. This puts the matter on a totally different footing. The detachment will march to-morrow morning at three o'clock to Englishtown.”

This order was given in consequence of the delay of the main body, by which the advanced corps, being too far on the right, would be unsupported, in case of an attack, as had been indicated in Hamilton's letter of the morning. Early on the twenty-seventh, the detachment under the

Marquis moved forward to Englishtown. The change in the position of the enemy rendering it proper to reinforce the advanced corps, and partly to relieve Lee's feelings, Washington detached him with two brigades to Englishtown to support La Fayette. In order to assure his purpose, he was instructed, that any operation in which the advance had engaged, should be persevered in ; and with this understanding, the command was confided to him. The main body then moved forward, and encamped within three miles of that place, — Morgan hovering on the right flank of the enemy, and Dickinson, with the Jersey militia, on the left.

On the evening of the twenty-seventh, Hamilton, who had rejoined the main body by order of Washington wrote to General Lee, directing him, from the apprehension that the enemy might move off at night, or early in the morning, to detach a party of six or eight hundred men, to lie near them, and to skirmish, so as to produce some delay ; while Lee was directed to give orders to Colonel Morgan to make an attack for a similar purpose : a previous order had been issued to Lee to call the officers together, and plan the attack ; and an hour was appointed by him for their conference ; but before they met, he rode out, and on the inquiry for orders, were informed that he had none to give.

In the interim, the enemy had taken a strong position with their right flank, on the skirt of a small wood, and their left secured by a forest, and a morass running towards their rear, a wood also covering their front.

The main body of the Americans being put in motion to support him, Lee was ordered to commence the attack. Colonel Hamilton, who had rejoined the Marquis before break of day, as soon as he saw the probability of the van of the advanced corps being engaged with the enemy, returned to Washington, who was coming up with the

main body, and advised* him to throw the right wing of the army round by the right, and to follow with the left wing directly in General Lee's rear, to support him; and an order was immediately given to Greene to file off with the right wing, and take a position so as to protect the right of the army, which was done. Hamilton then went forward to reconnoitre. Lee, after having advanced a short distance, ordered a halt; he then again moved forward, and in half an hour after, Wayne was directed by Lee to leave his own detachment, and take command of the front. Scott's brigade then advanced up the morass on one side, Varnum's following its rear. Wayne, on reaching the front, sent intelligence to Lee that the enemy were moving in great disorder, and urged him to push on the rear. He continued to advance, crossing the morass near the road where they were marching. Their whole force then in view halted; a body of British horse, covered by infantry, instantly charged the foremost regiment under Colonel Butler, who, pouring in a well-directed fire, broke them, and threw their covering party into disorder. The pursuit was kept up, when the enemy opened a fire from their artillery inclining to the right of the Americans, in order to gain an eminence, where their veterans formed with admirable coolness, as they came up in succession. Wayne hoping to gain the advantage of the ground, formed Scott's brigade, under a heavy discharge of artillery, and still pressed on, when an order was received from Lee, who Hamilton states "meditated the disgrace of the Americans," TO RETREAT. The enemy seeing the situation of this detachment wholly unsupported, passed a column through the village, and gained a position between it and the remainder of the army, when they again made a spirited charge with their

* Proceedings of a Court-Martial for the trial of General Lee, held at Brunswick, July 4th, 1778. Fitzgerald's testimony, p. 23. Tilghman's, p. 26.

horse, and the whole advance was compelled to retire; which they did, under cover of a wood, until they reached the body under Lee. Hamilton having urged in vain that possession should be taken of a hill which commanded the plain on which the enemy were coming up, and that there the battle should be fought,* rejoined Washington, to report what he had done. He thus represented the situation of the advance;† that when he came up with Lee, the enemy was drawn up with their right near a wood, their left in open ground covered by cavalry; that the American columns were within cannon shot of the enemy; that he rode up to the front of the column, and perceiving that their cavalry were filing off towards the left, as if to attempt Lee's right, he suggested to him that a column should wheel on their right, and attack them. This suggestion was approved; and Hamilton, by Lee's order, directed La Fayette to wheel by his right, gain, and attack the enemy's flank. At this instant, while Washington was standing with his arm extended over his horse, during a halt for a few moments, where the roads forked, a small party came rapidly up, from whom he learned that the advanced corps was on the retreat. He instantly, giving way to a burst of indignation, sprung upon his horse, and having ordered Colonel Harrison, who had returned from reconnoitring, to ascertain the truth, pushed forward to the rear of the advanced corps, and rallied the retreating troops.

To every inquiry as to the cause of the retreat, an unsatisfactory answer was given. Colonel Ogden, who followed, exclaimed with an oath, "we are flying from a shadow." The troops were then in the greatest disorder, ignorant what direction to pursue.

Washington meanwhile reached the knoll, where Lee was,—he immediately ordered Wayne to renew the

* Lee's Defence, p. 53.

† Hamilton's testimony, p. 20.

combat, directed cannon to be brought up, which was done by Colonel Oswald, and a brisk cannonade ensued. Then calling up Colonels Ramsay and Stewart, he vehemently exclaimed, that they were the officers on whom he should depend to give the enemy a check. While these regiments were forming, Lee approached. Washington demanded of him, in haste, the cause of the retreat. He replied — Sir, Sir, with hesitation, stating that it was owing to contradictory information and disobedience of orders, and that he did not choose to beard the British army in such a situation; and that besides, the attack was contrary to his opinion. Washington replied, that whatever was his opinion, he expected his orders would have been obeyed.

At this moment, Hamilton rode up, and exclaimed to Lee, “I will stay with you, my dear General, and die with you. Let us all die here, rather than retreat.” Perceiving the enemy advancing on the artillery, which, by the orders of General Knox had been posted on the right,* he advised that a detachment should march to their succour; when, after a short interval, Colonel Livingston pushed forward and repulsed them with spirit.

Hamilton then rode towards the rear; when finding Colonel Olney† retreating, with Varnum’s brigade, and fearing that the artillery in their front would be lost, he ordered the brigade to form along a fence near him, with all possible despatch, which they immediately did, and charged at the point of the bayonet, where Hamilton, who had assisted in forming them, and had placed himself at their head, had his horse shot under him; when, hurt by the fall,‡ and overcome by the heat, (for he had ridden throughout the action without his hat,) he was compelled to retire.

This party, after exchanging a sharp fire, gave time for

* Hamilton’s testimony, p. 20.

† Colonel Olney’s testimony, p. 40.

‡ Hamilton’s testimony, p. 21.

the artillery to fall back ; but too weak to prevent the enemy from outflanking them, retreated with considerable loss.

These two successive checks by Livingston and Olney, afforded time to make a disposition of the left wing, and to form the second line of the army upon an eminence, and in a copse in the rear covered by a morass. On this elevation, Stirling, who commanded that wing, placed cannon, which protected the charges of the infantry, and produced a great impression on the enemy, and stopped their progress.

Greene, as soon as he heard of the retreat, pushed forward, and selected a position on the right, which Hamilton had advised Lee to take, crowned it with artillery, and kept off the British advancing on the right, while he severely enfiladed the left. Wayne then advanced, and pouring in a close fire, drove the enemy beyond the morass, near which Butler had at first repulsed them. Washington followed up the attack, by orders to General Poor, with two brigades, to move on the right, and Woodford on their left, while Knox brought his artillery to bear upon their front. These dispositions were made ; but obstacles prevented their reaching the enemy until night had closed in.

The Americans, worn out by the intense heat, reposed on the field of battle, hoping to renew the action in the ensuing day ; but the enemy taking advantage of the darkness, pressed on, and succeeded in embarking at Sandy-Hook. Washington, unfortunately, believing that no serious injury could be inflicted upon them, leaving only a small force to hover around them, moved up for the protection of the Hudson.

This narrative shows the conspicuous services of Hamilton in this engagement ; and such was Washington's sense of their importance, that he caused a high eulogium upon him to be inserted in his despatch to congress, which Hamilton, from motives of delicacy, induced him to expunge. A letter from camp, published at that time, thus

speaks of the conduct of Washington's staff: "I am happy to have it in my power to mention the merit of Colonel Hamilton. He was incessant in his endeavours during the whole day, in reconnoitering the enemy, and in rallying and charging; but whether he or Colonel Laurens deserves most of our commendation is somewhat doubtful — both had their horses shot under them, and both exhibited singular proofs of bravery. They seemed to court death, under our doubtful circumstances, and triumphed over it as the face of war changed in our favour. Fitzgerald had a slight contusion with a musket ball; he and Meade claim the highest encomiums. Colonel Olney at the head of Var-num's brigade, made a successful charge with the bayonet; Colonel Barber received a ball through the side. The artillery under Knox and Oswald were much distinguished."

The result of this engagement, so honourable to its valour, aroused the greatest indignation in the army. The immediate friends of Lee sought to exculpate his conduct on the ground of discretionary orders, and an alleged contradiction of intelligence; and when brought before a court-martial, he did not hesitate to claim merit from the course which he had taken: but a large majority of the general officers, those especially who had been sent forward to bring on an engagement, the whole of Washington's staff, and the colonels of the several regiments, who received the first impression of the enemy, indulged the loudest complaints. Wayne, whose valour had been on this occasion, as on every other, eminently conspicuous, demanded Lee's arrest; and an investigation became unavoidable.

The court over which Stirling presided commenced its session on the fourth of July, and adjourned on the twelfth of August, after several interruptions, having found him "guilty of disobedience of orders in not attacking the enemy; of misbehaviour, by making an unnecessary and

disorderly retreat ; and of disrespect to the commander-in-chief :” and Lee was suspended from his command for twelve months, which he never resumed, — a sentence which, with a divided vote, was confirmed by congress.*

The defence made by Lee, was regarded as highly disingenuous ; and as will be seen from the following letter, an answer was contemplated by Colonel Laurens, but abandoned, from the delicacy due to an officer, whose sentence was then before congress.

MY DEAR HAMILTON,

You have seen, and by this time considered, General Lee’s infamous publication. I have collected some hints for an answer ; but I do not think, either that I can rely upon my own knowledge of facts and style to answer him fully, or that it would be prudent to undertake it without counsel. An affair of this kind ought to be passed over in total silence, or answered in a masterly manner.

The ancient secretary is the *Recueil* of modern history and anecdotes, and will give them to us with candour, elegance, and perspicuity. The pen of Junius is in your hand ; and I think you will, without difficulty, expose in his defence, letters, and last production, such a tissue of falsehood and inconsistency, as will satisfy the world, and put him forever to silence.

I think the affair will be definitively decided in congress this day. He has found means to league himself with the *old faction*, and to gain a great many partizans.

* December 5th, 1778. — The votes in congress were as follows :—

Negatives.—Messrs. Whipple, N.H. ; S. Adams, Lovell, Mass. ; Carmichael, Maryland ; M. Smith, Virginia ; Harnett, N. C. ; Langworthy, Georgia.

Affirmative.—Messrs. Frost, N. H. ; Holten, Mass. ; Collins, Rhode Island ; Sherman, Ellsworth, Connecticut ; Seudder, New-Jersey ; Searle, Pennsylvania ; Henry, Maryland ; F. L. Lee, Virginia ; Penn, Williams, N. C. ; Laurens, Drayton, S. C.

Having written a very offensive letter to congress, he was on the 10th of January, 1780, dismissed the service.

Adieu, my dear boy : — I shall set out for camp to-morrow.

JOHN LAURENS.

Although this purpose was abandoned, the family of Washington could not endure the continued imputations cast upon him by Lee. The biting sarcasms, and offensive manner which he had evinced on his trial, towards Laurens particularly, rankled in the bosom of that officer, whose indignation was increased by the relation of very offensive epithets, said to have been applied by him to his commander. Soon after the investigation by congress had been closed, a challenge was delivered on his behalf to General Lee, by his friend Hamilton, which resulted in a duel, in which Lee was slightly wounded, who subsequently disavowed the use of the language which had been imputed to him.

Believing that no serious injury could be inflicted on the enemy, the army remained in New-Jersey until intelligence being received of the arrival of a French fleet, under Count D'Estaing, it crossed the Hudson, and took a position in the vicinity of White Plains, favourable to either of the objects which might be concerted, — a descent on New-York or upon Rhode-Island. On the return of Laurens to headquarters, with information of the approach of the fleet, instructions having been received from congress, Hamilton, whom Washington stated "was well informed of the situation of the army, and of his sentiments on every point," was despatched to have an interview with the French admiral, and to give him a representation of the situation of the combatants.

It being supposed that the entrance of the fleet into the harbour of New-York would be attended with great difficulty, an attempt on Rhode-Island was determined upon ; and with this design, two brigades under La Fayette were

pushed on from the main army, and Laurens sent forward to consult with General Sullivan, then in command at Newport.

The result of this attempt, in itself most disastrous, threatened a danger still more serious. In the ardour of his feelings, Sullivan imputed a want of conduct to the French commander; which, though obvious, was impolitic. The wounded pride of D'Estaing took the alarm, and he was, with difficulty, soothed by the interposition of Greene and Washington.

Nothing of interest occurred during the residue of the year with the main army, which was cantoned throughout the winter in a line extending from Fishkill to Danbury.

The situation of the prisoners still remained a subject of great and increasing anxiety. Representations from head quarters had induced congress to depart, in some measure, from the strict line of retaliation they had adopted; and although in respect to Burgoyne they were inexorable, yet many other sources of embarrassment had ceased, and the concurrent anxiety of our new ally with the wishes of Washington, seemed to open a prospect of a more successful negotiation. A new proposition being offered by Sir Henry Clinton, Washington was authorized by congress to appoint commissioners for that purpose; and Colonels Hamilton and Harrison were selected to meet the British commissioners, Colonels Hyde and O'Hara, at Amboy. The conference soon terminated; the unexpected and novel demands of the enemy being rejected. One incident alone remains worthy of mention in this eventful year.

Congress had adopted a plan for relieving the distresses of the army, which were very urgent. The plan was intended to be kept a profound secret. A member of congress, one of the Cabal, divulged it to certain friends, who were charged with having speculated with him in flour. The views of congress were in some measure defeated, and

the sufferings of the army prolonged. "Hamilton," says Troup, "was informed of the facts, and made them the subject of a series of letters, which had the effect of seriously injuring the character of the member; and they struck me as the closest imitation of Junius which I had ever read." They appeared under the signature of Publius, an appellation which was afterwards adopted by him on the publication of the Federalist.



CHAPTER X.

[1779.]

THROUGH the exertions of General Greene and Colonel Wadsworth, and the system introduced under their administration of the Quarter-master-general and Commissariat departments, the army, although cantoned in a country already nearly exhausted, passed the winter in a great degree exempt from the sufferings which had attended it at Valley Forge.

The measures which had been adopted with respect to its organization in the preceding year, though productive of very beneficial consequences, from the nature of the force employed, required frequent modifications ; and with a view to this object a committee of congress was appointed to repair to head quarters. Its conferences with the commander-in-chief commenced on the eighth of January, at which time a plan was submitted to them, drawn up by Colonel Hamilton, under the eye of Washington, which gives a brief but interesting view of the various considerations that influenced the determinations which were subsequently taken as to the policy of the present year.

“The first and great object is to recruit the army.” First by enlisting all the men now in it during the war, who are engaged for any term short of that : for this purpose no bounty should be spared.

Secondly, by drafting upon some such plan as was recommended to the committee at Valley Forge last February.

The next object is, to fix some ideas respecting the northern preparations, concerning which the commander-in-chief now finds himself in a dilemma, and respecting the

operations of the next campaign in general, in order that measures may be taken systematically. The following questions, on which the foregoing will depend, ought to be considered and decided.

First. If the enemy retain their present force at New-York and Rhode-Island, can we assemble a sufficient force and means to expel them?

Second. If we cannot, can we make a successful attempt against Niagara, and retain a sufficient force at the same time on the sea-board to keep the enemy within bounds?

Third. Are our finances equal to eventual preparations for both of those objects?

If the first is determined in the affirmative, and the enemy keep possession, we ought to direct almost our whole force and exertions to that point; and for the security of our frontiers, endeavour to make some expedition against Detroit and the Indian settlements, by way of diversion. Our preparations ought then to be adapted to this plan, and if we cannot conveniently unite our preparations for this object with an expedition against Niagara, we ought to renounce the latter.

If the first question is answered negatively, and the second affirmatively, and if it is judged expedient to make such an attempt, our preparations ought to have reference principally thereto, and we must content ourselves with a merely defensive conduct elsewhere, and should study economy as much as possible. It is in vain to attempt things which are more the objects of desire than attainment. Every undertaking ought at least to be regulated by the state of our finances, the prospect of our supplies, and the probability of success. Without this, disappointment, disgrace, and an increase of debt will ensue on our part; exultation and renewed hope on that of the enemy. To determine, therefore, what we can undertake, the state of

the army, the prospect of recruiting it, paying, clothing and feeding it, the providing the necessary apparatus for offensive operations; all these matters ought to be well and maturely considered. On them every thing must depend; and however reluctantly we yield, they will compel us to conform to them, as by attempting impossibilities we shall ruin our affairs.

If the third question is answered affirmatively, which it is much to be feared cannot be done, then eventual preparations ought to be made for both. We shall then be best able to act according to future circumstances; for though it will be impossible to unite both objects in the execution, yet in the event of the enemy's leaving these states, we should be ready to strike an important blow for the effectual security of our frontiers, and for opening a door to a farther progress to Canada.

From the investigation of these points another question may possibly result.

Will not the situation of our affairs, on account of the depreciated condition of our currency, deficiency of bread, scarcity of forage, the exhausted state of our resources in the middle department, and the general distress of the inhabitants, render it advisable for the main body of the army to lie quiet in some favourable position for confining, as much as possible, the enemy to their present posts, (adopting, at the same time, the best means in our power to scourge the Indians, and prevent their depredations,) in order to save expenses, avoid new emissions, recruit our finances, and give a proper tone to our money for more vigorous measures hereafter?

In determining a plan of operations for next campaign, much will depend on the prospect of European affairs; what we have to expect from our friends; what they will expect from us; and what the enemy will probably be able to do. These points should be well weighed, and every

information concentrated to throw light upon them. But upon the whole, it will be the safest and most prudent way to suppose the worst, and prepare for it.

“It is scarcely necessary to say, that the providing ample supplies of arms, clothes, and ordnance stores, is essential, and that an uncertain dependence may not only be hurtful, but ruinous. Their importance demands that every possible expedient should be, without delay, adopted, towards obtaining these articles in due season for the purposes of next campaign.

“Heavy cannon, for posts in the Highlands, for battering, and for vessels, if offensive measures are to be pursued, must be immediately forwarded, and in considerable quantity. Large mortars, with a sufficient apparatus, will also be wanted.

“The completing the arrangement of the army, without farther delay, is a matter of great importance, whatever may be our plan. The want of this is the source of infinite dissatisfaction to the officers in general, and continual perplexity to the commander-in-chief. The want of brigadiers is a material inconvenience, and hath been the cause of much relaxation of discipline, discontent, and loss, in several instances.”

These remarks are followed by observations, indicating changes in the ordnance department, as suggested by General Knox ; in the clothing, and in the hospital departments. The immediate establishment of an inspectorship, on a definite plan, is strongly urged ; and an improved arrangement of the engineering department. The communication closes with a reference to the situation of the officers, which is stated “to be so singularly hard, that the bare mention of their case is sufficient to bring it home to the attention and feeling of every man of reflection, and will leave no doubt of the necessity of applying a remedy the most speedy and effectual.”

The views taken in this paper, were the ground-work of the deliberations of the committee ; and the plan of a defensive campaign, which was ultimately adopted, was enforced by various considerations.

The enemy's force, at New-York and Rhode Island, was at this time about twelve thousand men. From the circular position of their posts, the strength of their fortifications, and their shipping, it was believed, that to a successful attempt, double that number of effectives would be necessary. These, both from the rate of wages and the high price of labour, it was impossible to get, beside the extreme difficulty of providing subsistence and forage for so large a force.

For an attack upon the frontier posts of the interior, a body of permanent troops with auxiliaries, to the amount of more than twenty thousand men, was deemed requisite ; for the transportation of whom, ships were to be built, boats provided, and greater expense incurred, than would be necessary for an attack on New-York.

From the objections to these plans an expedition against the Indians was free, and attended with much less expense, while the country would, in the interval, be left to repose, the disbursements of the year diminished — a general system of economy might be adopted, and enlistments made to continue during the war.

But as to this latter course, indicated more by the national necessities than by any other considerations, there were grounds of serious hesitation. “The very inactivity, it was naturally feared, might be attributed to the weakness of the United States, and thus affect their credit and importance abroad, and produce a most serious effect on their negotiations in Europe. It might also discourage the people, inspirit the disaffected, and give time for the discontented to combine and produce extensive divisions, while a successful blow given to the enemy, in the reduced state

of the army, might compel them to evacuate the United States, to which there would be little probability of their return." But to this the finances of the country were incompetent; and it was believed no adequate force could be assembled.

After a deliberate view of the subject, a defensive plan was agreed upon, only to be departed from in the contingency of such reinforcements from France, as would justify drawing on the resources of the country, to an extent that would ensure the accomplishment of some capital object.

For the better organization of the army, in addition to the subjects previously submitted to the committee, the adoption of measures to relieve the officers was a primary consideration; and in a letter received from head quarters, after stating "that the news of peace had diverted the minds of the officers at Valley Forge," it was urged, in order "that the officers should take pleasure in their situation, not merely endure it; which would render them an insipid and spiritless mass, incapable of acting with vigour, and ready to fall to pieces at every reverse of fortune;" that they should be provided with clothing by public authority, at prices proportioned to their pay: that the rations and subsistence which they had received rendered their situation indigent and miserable, and an expedient of a periodical valuation of their rations was proposed. "To attach them heartily to the service, their expectations of futurity must be interested." With this view, a half-pay or pensionary establishment for life was recommended, and not for a term of years, on the ground, "that the officer looks beyond a limited period, and naturally flatters himself that he will outlive it." The unpleasant restrictions which attended the resolves for seven years were condemned; pensions for the widows of the officers were recommended; and to the objection raised to pensions, that they were inconsistent with the maxims

of government, it was answered, "that it equally applied to pensions for years as to those for lives." "It is alike a pension, in both cases; in one, for a fixed and determinate period; in the other, for a contingent period." Strongly as these views were taken, it was nevertheless cautiously suggested, "that the subject should not be brought forward unless certain of success; that it was a point on which the officers' feelings were much engaged, and should not be awakened unless gratified."

Within a few days after, a plan for a clothing department was proposed, establishing a subordination of officers, and recommending a distinct colour and uniform for each state corps; to diminish the expense of competition for the same colour; to distinguish the corps from each other; to discriminate merit; and to prevent expense to the officers by frequent changes.

It has been previously observed, that on the appointment of Steuben, a brief plan of an inspectorship had been in part adopted by congress in the spring of 1778. This plan was subsequently modified and completed in the ensuing month of September, when the number of the regiments was allotted to each state.

The system then introduced, proved imperfect; and having been agreed to in committee, on the twenty-eighth of January of this year, a new plan for this department was reported by the committee of conference to congress, and passed on the eighteenth of February following. The report exists among the archives of the government in a rough state; the preamble in another hand, but the body of it, with marks of alteration by him, in the autography of Hamilton; where may also be found a plan drawn up by him for completing the regiments, and changing their establishment, in which is a project for an annual draft. Inducements for reenlistments, and the modes of supplying the deficiency, are set forth with great perspicuity, giving the

general principles for such a procedure, which, in similar emergencies, might be adopted with advantage.

While these topics were engaging their attention, congress was called, by a communication from Mr. Arthur Lee, and by a conference with the French minister, to a negotiation with Spain, involving points of great moment, the consideration of which is deferred to a subsequent part of this narrative.

The inactivity of the preceding campaign, had induced a general languor in the national legislature, which gave scope to those dissensions from which public bodies, not acting under the pressure of controlling circumstances, are rarely free, and from which the short predatory invasion of Virginia, by General Matthews, and the remote, though interesting events in Georgia and Carolina, were insufficient to arouse them.

In early spring, the enemy, waiting reinforcements, were content to harass and alarm the states adjacent to New-York by sudden inroads, which did not advance in the least the great object of the contest, but only served to increase the horrors of war, by invading the unsuspecting security of the settlements near the coast. These incursions were aggravated by being chiefly undertaken by the American refugees; who, forgetting their duty to their country, discarded all regard to the obligations of humanity, and evincing the cruelty, without the courage of other freebooters, rendered doubly afflicting this border warfare.

Among other acts of this character, the expedition of Tryon into Connecticut, and an attack upon Tarrytown, were most conspicuous; and being conducted, in these instances, by officers of the regular army, excited the loudest clamour.

The debateable ground of Westchester, had long been a scene of the most wanton enormities. There parties were regularly organized, under the singular denominations of

skinners and cow-boys ; and as a natural consequence of this petty warfare, long continued, a great part of the community were demoralized, and each combination formed itself into regular bands of depredators.

But the principal seat of these outrages was in the lower districts of New-Jersey, which being easily accessible through its numerous inlets from the ocean, and having a sparse population, was kept in constant alarm. Small vessels were seen continually hovering along the coast, which made in upon them at midnight, carried off all the plunder they could find, fired the houses, murdered all who resisted, and perpetrated shocking barbarities. Bands of robbers roamed over the less frequented regions, and along the barrens, who, excited to cruelty by their conflicts with the militia, marked their path with rapine and with blood.

The vigilance exerted by Governor Livingston, and the necessary severity exercised upon these outlaws, rendered him an object of their particular hostility, and plans were frequently formed to seize his person. On one occasion, intelligence of his being at a certain spot was given, a party was embodied to carry him off, and two men, bolder than the others, were sent forward to watch his movements. Accident saved him. In the habit of riding at sunrise, he had, on the appointed day, awakened sooner than usual, and had just passed the place selected for his capture or destruction, when the party made their appearance a few moments too late. At another time a project was devised for carrying off the speaker* of the New-Jersey legislature, which was nearly successful.

A similar design was formed on the person of Washington. He had appointed to meet some officers at a designated place. Information was given by a female in the tory interest, and the necessary arrangements were made

* Mr. Hornblower.

to seize him ; but timely intelligence* frustrated the attempt.

A more serious impression was made by a letter of Governor Livingston, written about this time to Sir Henry Clinton, alleging that he had the most authentic proofs of a general officer under his command having offered a large sum for his assassination in case he could not be taken alive, and intimating that the person of General Clinton might be reached in retaliation, but exempting him from all knowledge of this atrocious proposal. It is due to justice to state, that this charge was met on the part of the English commander with an explicit and indignant denial.

The repetition of these attempts suggested the idea of making Sir Henry Clinton a prisoner ; and a plan for this purpose was devised and submitted to General Washington. The British general was then occupying a house near the Battery, in New-York, situate a few yards from the Hudson river. Intelligence, through spies, had been obtained of the approaches to his bed-chamber. Light whale-boats, with muffled oars, were to be placed under the command of Colonel Humphreys, of Connecticut ; and the party, in full preparation, were waiting anxiously the approach of night for the execution of their purpose.

Colonel Hamilton, in the interval, became informed of the intended enterprise. He observed to General Washington "that there could be little doubt of its success : but, sir," said he, "have you examined the consequences of it ?" The General inquired, "in what respect ?" "Why," replied Hamilton, "it has occurred to me that we shall rather lose

* A partizan officer, a native of New-York, called at the shop of Mulligan late in the evening, to obtain a watch-coat. The late hour awakened curiosity. After some inquiries, the officer vauntingly boasted, that, before another day, they would have his rebel General in their hands. This staunch patriot, as soon as the officer left him, hastened unobserved to the wharf, and despatched a billet by a negro, giving information of the design.

than gain, by removing Sir Henry Clinton from the command of the British army, because we perfectly understand his character ; and, by taking him off, we only make way for some other, perhaps an abler officer, whose character and dispositions we have to learn." The General acknowledged the force of the objection, and abandoned the project.

The several occurrences which have been referred to, together with the more serious devastations committed at various points along the sea-board, as well as those in the interior, produced a stronger excitement in congress than in the army. For, it is among the remarkable incidents of this Revolution, that the military influence was constantly exerted to check the civil authorities in their disposition to retaliate ; and that in their disinclination to carry into effect the severe orders of congress, the army in numerous instances incurred almost the reproach of insubordination.

Cold speculations on the past have reproved this want of vigour ; but who would willingly add another instance of retaliation to those to which his countrymen were reluctantly compelled ?

Of the force of this feeling with some members of congress, the following report, called the " Burning Report," from the hand of Mr. Gouverneur Morris, is a strong illustration.

" Your committee, to whom was referred General Washington's letter of the thirteenth of July, 1779, with the enclosures, beg leave to report the following draft of a letter from the President to the minister plenipotentiary of the United States at the court of Versailles :

" SIR,

The burning of Suffolk in Virginia, Fairfield, East Haven, Green Farms, Norwalk in Connecticut, together with the ravages committed in Georgia and South Carolina, form a cruel commentary upon the proclamation of the British com-

missioners. This proclamation was defended in their parliament, as meaning no more than that in future the war was to be carried on against America as against other nations. It becomes, therefore, a common cause of all nations to punish a people who so daringly violate the rights of humanity : and it is particularly incumbent upon the United States, as well to check their present barbarities as to conform to the manifesto published in answer to the proclamation above mentioned, and to deter all others, by striking examples, from a breach of those laws which are held sacred among civilized nations. I am, therefore, to instruct you, that you employ incendiaries to set fire to the capital of the British dominions, particularly the royal palace, and to such other towns in Great Britain as may be most expedient ; and that as soon as some great object of this sort can be accomplished, you do in a proper manifesto avow the same as having been by the order of congress — declare that they are determined at all times to meet their enemies, in whatever kind of war they shall choose to carry on, whether it be of civilized or of savage nations, and call upon all the powers of Europe, who may have formerly suffered by the pride and cruelty of Great Britain, or who feel a just indignation at her present conduct, to join their efforts in vindicating the insulted laws of humanity. I am," &c.

It was read on the second of August, 1779 ; but it is hardly necessary to add, was never acted upon.

Towards the last of the month of May, indications were given of designs of a more formidable character ; and as the only probable objects of the enemy were either the fortifications in the Highlands, or an attempt to take a position between the different bodies of the American army, and to attack them in detail, Washington moved his principal force then at Middlebrook to Smith's Clove, on the west side of the Hudson, whence immediate reinforce-

ments could be sent in case of an attack upon West Point.

Events soon proved the wisdom of this precaution. Sir Henry Clinton, on the return of a detachment from the South, moved up the Hudson, and made a sudden descent on Stony Point, which was abandoned. On the following day he reduced Fort La Fayette, and leaving a sufficient force to strengthen the works, deterred by the proximity of General Washington, relinquished his designs upon West Point, the great object of his movement, and returned to New-York.

These positions being the keys of the Highlands, and commanding the only ferry in that vicinity, were esteemed of too great importance to be permitted to remain in the hands of the enemy, and it was determined to retake them.

The possession of Stony Point,—a rugged acclivity, which stretches so far into the channel of the Hudson, as to give to its upper waters the appearance of a lake embosomed in a vast and magnificent amphitheatre of mountains, commands the opposite fortress. Its reduction was confided to General Wayne, at the head of the light infantry. After taking every precaution to conceal his purpose, and issuing imperative orders to his men to hold their fire, he succeeded in surprising the garrison at midnight, and with a trifling loss, notwithstanding numerous obstructions, and amid a heavy fire of musketry and grape, entered the works at the point of the bayonet, without having discharged a shot.

Colonel Fleury, a young and titled soldier of France, whose ardent courage and admirable temper endeared him to the army, was the first to enter the fort and strike the British standard; and with two others of the advanced party alone survived. Wayne, whose impetuous spirit had given him the epithet among his soldiers of “mad Anthony,”

received a wound in his head, and supposing it would terminate fatally, entreated his aids to convey him to the fort, there to die ; but the wound proved slight, and this gallant officer, who had been foremost in every preceding action, lived to add laurel upon laurel to his fame, until not an officer in the army could boast a prouder name.*

The British general, either finding little glory to be won in New-England, or intent on the possession of these fortresses, with a view to some ulterior object, hastened to their recovery. Washington, unwilling to diminish his army by detaching a force adequate to their support, reluctantly determined to evacuate them ; and adhering to his defensive system, established his head-quarters at West Point.

A letter from Mr. Duane, a delegate in congress from New-York, with whom Colonel Hamilton had formed an intimacy, thus refers to these incidents :

“ DEAR SIR,

Accept my thanks for your favour of the twenty-eighth of August, and your obliging assurances that you will comply with my request. Unless my anxiety in the events of the campaign had been very great, I should not have been so unreasonable as to impose this burthen on any of my much respected friends at head quarters, well knowing that they, of all others, have the least leisure. I find the British reinforcement is arrived. To me it brings no terror, as I think we have the strongest evidence that it was not originally intended to exceed four thousand men, and

* The report of this brilliant affair to congress, prepared by Hamilton, gives a vivid account of this attack. That body had previously expressed their sense of the importance of the attempt ; (June 11th, 1779,) they adopted resolutions, ordering medals to be struck in honour of Wayne, Colonel Fleury, and Major Stewart, and directed the value of the stores captured to be divided among the troops.

these raw recruits. You say Wayne is still safe. Let him keep a sharp look out ; for I still hold the opinion that Sir Henry Clinton is bound in honour to chastise him for one of the most daring and insolent assaults that is to be found in the records of chivalry : an achievement so brilliant in itself, so romantic in the scale of British admiration, that none but a hero, inspired by the fortitude, instructed by the wisdom, and guided by the planet of Washington, could, by the exploit at Paulus Hook,* have furnished materials in the page of history to give it a parallel. * *

* * * You see, from this, how much I am at my ease. To know the value of domestic enjoyment, next to headquarters, I recommend the chair at the board of treasury for ten months of a session, in which both our friends and foes are waging a successful war against the public credit. Present my affectionate regard to his excellency and the family, and believe me, with every friendly sentiment, your affectionate and devoted servant,

JAMES DUANE."

In another letter of the sixteenth of September the same gentleman observes, "I perfectly agree in opinion with you what the enemy ought, in good policy, to attempt ; but they uniformly contravene their best interest, and pursue measures which can produce the least possible advantage. I think I intimated to you, that I should not be surprised, if Count D'Estaing paid a visit to us early this fall. Reports prevail which announce his approach. In that case, they will be as safe in New-York as at Savannah or Charleston, and it is no slander to say that the *safety* of their army has all along been their first object. What will the world think of our spirit and resources, when, at the very instant our enemies, foreign and domestic, pronounce our imme-

* Referring to the daring achievement of Major Lee.

diate ruin, from the embarrassment of our finances and a train of heavy calamities, they see their grand army cooped up in garrison, their forts taken from them by unparalleled valour, the country of their savage allies ravaged and destroyed without a single effort for their protection, and a capital naval armament, equipped by a single state, which it required misconduct *perhaps* on our part, and certainly the most hazardous efforts on theirs, to defeat? The condition of our enemies, instead of being formidable, as they predicted, seems daily to become more feeble, and instead of the vigorous and decisive operations which can alone have revived their declining cause and kept up the spirits of their infatuated adherents, we see nothing but languor, discontent, and disgust, in their army, their fleets, and their councils. Their king alone, as if hardened by a judicial blindness, persists in his obstinate folly, and courts the destruction of the British empire. If, in addition to this, sickness has taken a deep root among his troops, a decisive period must, in all probability, speedily be put to their mad career.

“Count D’Estaing appears to have the ball at his feet. His command of the ocean must be undisputed, when he is joined by the Spanish squadron lately at Havannah. He may divide his force, subdue the West India Islands, and assist us in capturing the remnant of our enemies on this continent. I have, however, some distrust of the Count’s *planet*. His former ill luck on our coast has led me to think that he is no Felix. How do you like the new minister from France?”

The gentleman here referred to was Monsieur de la Luzerne, who is thus briefly noticed in a letter from Baron Steuben to Colonel Hamilton.

“M. de la Luzerne desires me to join him on his route, to accompany him to head quarters. I shall depart on Tuesday morning for Providence, where I shall require three

days to review the regiments; after which I shall return immediately to Hartford to join the minister.

“I promised to give you a picture of his new excellency. He is about thirty-six years of age, though he appears younger. In the last war he was aid-de-camp to Marshal Broglio. He appears to me to be a man of solid sense, and less presumptuous than the people of quality of that country usually are. His manners are prepossessing; and they would be more so if he could speak English. His character appears to me good; and he is less reserved than European ministers usually are. His personal appearance will not displease the ladies of Philadelphia. He is a young chevalier of Malta, who is not so much imbrowned by his crusades, but that the American beauties will take pains to teach him English in a short time. His secretary, M. de Marbois, is a counsellor of Parliament, from Metz in Lorraine — speaks good English; and is a man who shows much information and judgement.” Hamilton briefly replied:

“DEAR BARON — I am at this moment honoured with your letter of the 30th ultimo, and have communicated that part of it which concerns M. de la Luzerne to the General; agreeably to which we shall take our measures on the reception of this private public gentleman. We had prepared a party of cavalry to receive him at Fishkill, on the supposition that he would set out with an escort from Boston; but we have now sent orders to the party immediately to take the route you mention to Hartford, and there place themselves under your orders.

“The General requests you will make his respectful compliments to your chevalier, and gives you *carte blanche* to say every handsome thing you think proper in his name, of the pleasure which this visit will give him. I have no doubt that your portrait, which appears to be executed *en maitre*, will be found a just representation of the original; and if he

is as happy as his predecessor in gaining the esteem and confidence of the *men* of this country, with so many talents to conciliate the leaders, his ministry will not be unsuccessful. I augur well for him. General Washington proposes to meet him, as a private gentleman, at Fishkill."

The interview, at which Hamilton was present, was of the highest importance. A full and candid statement was given to the French minister of the resources and embarrassments of the nation; and he was duly impressed with the importance of obtaining such aids as the finances of the country required.

The rumoured approach of Count D'Estaing being soon after confirmed by despatches from congress, Washington, who had stationed Major Lee in Monmouth county, with instructions to communicate to him the situation and force of the enemy, and to propose some preliminary movements, addressed a letter to the Count on the fourth of October, informing him that he had called in reinforcements from the neighbouring states, and that he was taking measures to prepare for a co-operation, with all the despatch and vigour his circumstances would permit,—pointing out to him in detail the situation of New-York and Rhode-Island; suggesting the necessary measures to render an attempt in either port successful; and disclosing, in an explicit manner, all the difficulties attendant upon the enterprise.

On the seventh of October, he farther writes: "Since my letter to your excellency on the fourth instant, I have had the honour of a visit from his excellency Monsieur Gerard. In the conversation we had relative to a co-operation with the fleet and troops under your command, he expressed his doubts of its being possible for you to continue such a length of time as may be essential to the success of the undertaking, and which alone could justify me in going into those extensive preparations absolutely necessary on our part. I have, therefore, appointed Brigadier General Du Portail and Co-

Colonel Hamilton to wait upon your excellency as speedily as possible, and explain to you fully my ideas of the proposed co-operation ; the means we shall be able to employ ; the obstacles we shall have to encounter on our side ; the plans which it may be proper to pursue, and the measures which are taking, and may be taken by the enemy to counteract them. This will enable your excellency to determine what you can with propriety undertake. I shall only add, that if your excellency will engage to co-operate with your whole naval and land force against the enemy's fleet and army at New-York, till the winter is so far advanced, that the ice will make it impracticable to remain with your fleet any longer in port, I will bring twenty-five thousand effective men into the field, and will exert all the resources of the country in a vigorous and decided co-operation.

“ Without this assurance on the part of your excellency, it would be inconsistent with my duty to the public, and to the common cause, to incur the expense and hazard which would be inseparable from the enterprise, and the more disagreeable consequences which would attend a failure. I flatter myself your excellency will be fully sensible of the weight of the reasons on which this declaration is founded, and will approve the frankness with which it is made, and with which I have instructed General Du Portail and Colonel Hamilton to disclose to you every circumstance, and every consideration, with which it is necessary you should be acquainted. If your determination should be in favour of the enterprise, I request you will honour me with a line expressive of your ultimate intentions, and that you will communicate to the gentlemen who now wait upon you, the previous measures you propose to pursue, and your sentiments of the most eligible plan of co-operation. I shall act in consequence, till the period arrives for concerting a final and more determinate plan.

“ I would now observe to your excellency, that you may

repose the most implicit confidence in General Du Portail and Colonel Hamilton, and I accordingly recommend them to your best civilities and esteem; and having done so, I have only to renew the assurances of that sincere attachment and perfect respect, with which I have the honour to be,

“Your excellency’s most obedient servant,

“GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

His Excellency Count D’Estaing.

The utmost interest was, at this moment, awakened throughout the country. An interesting crisis was expected; and a long correspondence between Washington and Hamilton ensued, as the various intelligence was received, which would probably affect the intended enterprise. These letters fully disclose the anxiety of the commander-in-chief, to fulfil, by a decisive blow, the high wrought expectations of the people. The enemy were, at this time, filled with dismay. The fortifications at New-York were carried on with the utmost activity; the garrisons were withdrawn from the posts on the Hudson; and the troops stationed at Newport, whom Washington had urged should be surprised, were finally transferred to New-York.

But notwithstanding the most anxious solicitations to bring the French admiral to a decision, it was ascertained that no determinate resolution would be taken by him; and after all the ardent hopes which had been encouraged, and the mighty achievements which were to be performed, the French fleet, early in the month of November, abandoned the American coast, and proceeded to France; — thus fulfilling the prophecy of Mr. Duane, “that the Count’s planet could not be trusted.”

All prospect of active operations by the main army having ceased, Colonel Hamilton, weary of inactivity, and convinced that the policy of the enemy would henceforth direct

their efforts to the subjugation of the weaker states, influenced also by a desire to join his friend Laurens, and to obtain a separate command, applied to Washington for permission to proceed to the south; but the proposal did not meet the views of the commander-in-chief, and his purpose was relinquished.

The private letters which are to be found among Hamilton's papers, written at this uninteresting period of the revolution, have little other value than to exhibit the warm affections which prevailed in the army towards him, especially among the foreign officers, with whom his familiarity with their language, and easy manners, placed him on the happiest terms. Their situation, in a country as yet little advanced in the arts of social life, was, to men of artificial habits, educated amid all the luxuries of a court, often painful; and they gladly availed themselves of his influence with the commander-in-chief,—relating to him their thousand wants, and making him the confidant of their little secrets. Often as he was embarrassed by the extravagance of their expectations, he seems always to have indulged the kindest feelings towards them, and he frequently looked back to the services which he had rendered to those gallant men, with great satisfaction.

The introduction of these letters would too much interrupt the progress of this narrative; but the following will be perused with interest, as giving a brief but expressive picture of the condition of the soldiers. It is from Fleury, dated Light Infantry Camp, Highlands.

“DEAR COL.

“The officers of the two first battalions of light infantry, which I actually command, have applied to me for leave to run over these craggy mountains barefooted, and beg that I would write to head quarters to have an order from his excellency to get a pare shoes for each. The shoes they

hint to are at New-Windsor, and their intention is to pay for.

“Do not be so greedy for shoes as for my blanket, and think that the most urgent necessity has determined their application. They are quite barefooted.

“N. B. As his excellency could form a very advantageous idea of our condition in shoes, the appearance of the officers who dined to-day at head quarters and were not quite without, I beg you would observe to him, if necessary, *that each company has furnished a shoe for their dressing.*”

This intimate intercourse with these gentlemen, was often turned to a useful purpose. It enabled him to keep up a correspondence with France, and gave him the channel for many communications which reached her court, free from all official formality. With Du Plessis, who was in favour, he corresponded in cypher, and it is stated by Colonel Fish, as one of the incidents of this intimacy, that Hamilton was the first person to suggest the introduction of a French army into the United States.*

* In a memoir of Colonel Fish, of date March twenty-first, 1822, it is stated, “In one of our confidential conversations, Hamilton, speaking of the Marquis La Fayette, said, ‘The United States are under infinite obligations to him beyond what is known, not only for his valour and good conduct as major-general of our army, but for his good offices and influence in our behalf with the court of France. The French army now here, co-operating with us, would not have been in this country but through his means.’ He then said, that for some considerable time previous to the arrival of the French army under Count Rochambeau, he (Colonel Hamilton,) had conceived the idea and had weighed in his own mind the propriety of such a measure, and having satisfied himself on the subject, *he had suggested the idea* to the Marquis La Fayette, expressing to him at the same time, not only the powerful effect that would be produced in our army and country generally by the introduction of a small military force from France to co-operate with us, but the increased effect that would result should the Marquis himself be appointed to the command. This project met a welcome reception, and after some explanatory remarks as to the details of the plan, the Marquis, with all the zeal and promptitude which

The sprightly tone which these accomplished men imparted to the camp, only caused the absence of Laurens, who added grace to every circle in which he moved, and interest to every subject on which he spoke, and who, led by attachment to his native state, had repaired to her amid her difficulties, to be the more regretted.

On his departure from head quarters, Hamilton, who had seen similar corps in the West Indies, which suggested the idea of raising a body of black levies for the protection of South Carolina, gave him the following letter of introduction to Mr. Jay.

HAMILTON TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS.

DEAR SIR,

Colonel Laurens, who will have the honour of delivering you this letter, is on his way to South Carolina, on a project which I think in the present situation of affairs there, is a very good one, and deserves every kind of support and encouragement. This is, to raise two, three, or four battalions of negroes, with the assistance of the government of that state, by contributions from the owners, in proportion to the number they possess. If you should think proper to enter upon the subject with him, he will give you a detail of his plan. He wishes to have it recommended by congress to the state, and as an inducement, that they would engage to take their battalions into continental pay.

It appears to me, that an expedient of this kind in the

characterised him, addressed the French government and their ambassador here on the subject, urging the advantages which would result to both nations from having a French military force in this country. This proposition was immediately patronized and enforced by the family and connexions of the Marquis, which were then in power and great influence in France, and adopted by that government. I deem it a duty incumbent on me, and a tribute due to his memory, that the knowledge of this fact should be recorded as an additional evidence of his pre-eminent services to his country."

present state of southern affairs, is the most rational that can be adopted, and promises very important advantages. Indeed, I hardly see how a sufficient force can be collected in that quarter without it; and the enemy's operations there are growing infinitely serious and formidable. I have not the least doubt that the negroes will make very excellent soldiers, with proper management; and I will venture to pronounce that they cannot be put in better hands than those of Mr. Laurens. He has all the zeal, intelligence, and enterprise, and every other qualification requisite to succeed in such an undertaking. It is a maxim with some great military judges, that with sensible officers, soldiers can hardly be too stupid; and on this principle it is thought that the Russians would make the best soldiers in the world if they were under other officers than their own. The King of Prussia is among the number who maintains this doctrine, and has a very emphatic saying on the occasion, which I do not exactly recollect. I mention this because I have frequently heard it objected to the scheme of embodying negroes, that they are too stupid to make soldiers. This is so far from appearing to me a valid objection, that I think their want of cultivation, (for their natural faculties are probably as good as ours,) joined to that habit of subordination which they acquire from a life of servitude, will enable them sooner to become soldiers than our white inhabitants. Let officers be men of sense and sentiment, and the nearer the soldiers approach to machines, perhaps the better.

I foresee that this project will have to combat much opposition from prejudice and self-interest. The contempt we have been taught to entertain for the blacks, makes us fancy many things that are founded neither in reason nor experience; and an unwillingness to part with property of so valuable a kind, will furnish a thousand arguments to show the impracticability or pernicious tendency of a scheme which requires such sacrifices. But it should be consider-

ed, that if we do not make use of them in this way, the enemy probably will, and that the best way to counteract the temptations they will hold out, will be, to offer them ourselves. An essential part of the plan is, to give them their freedom with their swords. This will secure their fidelity, animate their courage, and, I believe, will have a good influence upon those who remain, by opening a door to their emancipation. This circumstance, I confess, has no small weight in inducing me to wish the success of the project ; for the dictates of humanity and true policy equally interest me in favour of this unfortunate class of men.

When I am on the subject of southern affairs, you will excuse the liberty I take in saying, that I do not think measures sufficiently vigorous are pursuing for our defence in that quarter. Except the few regular troops of South Carolina, we seem to be relying wholly on the militia of that and the two neighbouring states. These will soon grow impatient of service, and leave our affairs in a miserable situation. No considerable force can be uniformly kept up by militia ; to say nothing of the many obvious and well-known inconveniences that attend this kind of troops. I would beg leave to suggest, sir, that no time ought to be lost in making a draft of militia to serve a twelve-month, from the states of North and South Carolina and Virginia. But South Carolina, being very weak in her population of whites, may be excused from the draft, on condition of furnishing the black battalions. The two others may furnish about three thousand five hundred men, and be exempted, on that account, from sending any succours to this army. The states to the northward of Virginia will be fully able to give competent supplies to the army here, and it will require all the force and exertions of the three states I have mentioned, to withstand the storm which has arisen, and is increasing in the south.

The troops drafted must be thrown into battalions, and

officered in the best manner we can. The supernumerary officers may be made use of as far as they will go. If arms are wanted for their troops, and no better way of supplying them is to be found, we should endeavour to levy a contribution of arms upon the militia at large. Extraordinary exigencies demand extraordinary means. I fear this southern business will become a very *grave* one.

With the truest respect and esteem, I am, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

ALEX. HAMILTON.

Head Quarters, March 14, 1779.

His Excellency John Jay, President of Congress.

The following extract of a letter from Laurens to Hamilton, refers to this subject.

LAURENS TO HAMILTON.

Charleston.

Ternant will relate to you how many violent struggles I have had between duty and inclination — how much my heart was with you, while I appeared to be most actively employed here. But it appears to me that I should be inexcusable in the light of a citizen, if I did not continue my utmost efforts for carrying the plan of the black levies into execution, while there remain the smallest hopes of success.

Our army is reduced to nothing almost, by the departure of the Virginians. Scott's arrival will scarcely restore us to our ancient number. If the enemy destine the reinforcements from Great Britain to this quarter, as in policy they ought to do, that number will be insufficient for the security of our country. The Governor, among other matters to be laid before the House of Assembly, intends to propose the completing our continental battalions by drafts from the militia. This measure, I am told, is so unpopular that there is no hope of succeeding in it. Either this must be adopted,

or the black levies, or the state will fall a victim to the improvidence of its inhabitants.

The House of Representatives have had a longer recess than usual, occasioned by the number of members in the field. It will be convened, however, in a few days. I intend to qualify, and make a final effort. Oh, that I were a Demosthenes! The Athenians never deserved a more bitter exprobation than our countrymen.

General Clinton's movement, and your march in consequence, made me wish to be with you. If any thing important should be done in your quarter, while I am doing daily penance here, and making successless harangues, I shall execrate my stars, and be out of humour with the world. I entreat you, my dear friend, write me as frequently as circumstances will permit, and enlighten me upon what is going forward.

Adieu. My love to our colleagues. I am afraid I was so thoughtless as to omit my remembrances to Gibbes. Tell him that I am always his sincere well-wisher, and hope to laugh with him again ere long. Adieu, again.

Yours ever,

JOHN LAURENS.

P. S. You know my opinion of Ternant's value. His health and affairs call him to the North. If you can render him any services, they will be worthily bestowed. We have not hitherto availed ourselves of his zeal and talent.

The following letter from Hamilton to Laurens is the only one which has met our inquiries. From the interest which this cotemporary correspondence gives to the story of the Revolution, it is to be regretted that so few remains exist of the extensive communications which he kept up with the officers of the army; the want of which prevents that individuality being given to the early history of

our country, from which, now that the general outlines are known, increased interest can only be derived.

HAMILTON TO LAURENS.

“Cold in my professions — warm in my friendships — I wish, my dear Laurens, it were in my power, by actions, rather than words, to convince you that I love you. I shall only tell you, that till you bid us adieu, I hardly knew the value you had taught my heart to set upon you. Indeed, my friend, it was not well done. You know the opinion I entertain of mankind ; and how much it is my desire to preserve myself free from particular attachments, and to keep my happiness independent of the caprices of others. You should not have taken advantage of my sensibility, to steal into my affections without my consent. But as you have done it, and as we are generally indulgent to those we love, I shall not scruple to pardon the fraud you have committed, on one condition ; that for my sake, if not for your own, you will continue to merit the partiality which you have so artfully instilled into me.

“I have received your two letters ; one from Philadelphia, the other from Chester. I am pleased with your success so far ; and I hope the favourable omens that precede your application to the Assembly, may have as favourable an issue ; provided the situation of affairs should require it, which I fear will be the case. But, both for your country’s sake, and for my own, I wish the enemy may be gone from Georgia before you arrive ; and that you may be obliged to return, and share the fortunes of your old friends. In respect to the commission which you received from Congress, all the world must think your conduct perfectly right. Indeed, your ideas upon this occasion seem not to have their wonted accuracy ; and you have had scruples, in a great measure, without foundation. By your

appointment as aid-de-camp to the commander-in-chief, you had as much the rank of lieutenant-colonel as any officer in the line. Your receiving a commission as lieutenant-colonel, from the date of that appointment, does not in the least injure or interfere with one of them ; unless by virtue of it you are introduced into a particular regiment, in violation of the right of succession, which is not the case at present, neither is it a necessary consequence. As you were going to command a battalion, it was proper you should have a commission ; and if this commission had been dated posterior to your appointment as aid-de-camp, I should have considered it derogatory to your former rank, to mine, and to that of the whole corps. The only thing I see wrong in the affair is this : congress, by their conduct, both on the former and present occasion, appear to have intended to confer a privilege, an honour, a mark of distinction, a something upon you, which they withheld from other gentlemen of the family. This carries with it an air of preference, which, though we can all truly say we love your character and admire your military merit, cannot fail to give some of us uneasy sensations. But in this, my dear, I wish you to understand me well. The blame, if there is any, falls wholly upon congress. I repeat it, your conduct has been perfectly right, and even laudable ; — you rejected the offer when you ought to have rejected it, and you accepted it when you ought to have accepted it ; and let me add, with a degree of over-scrupulous delicacy. It was necessary to your project. Your project was the public good ; and I should have done the same. In hesitating, you have refined on the refinements of generosity.

“There is a total stagnation of news here. Gates has refused the Indian command. Sullivan is come to take it. The former has lately given a fresh proof of his impudence, his folly, and his *****. ’Tis no great matter ; but a peculiarity in the case prevents my saying what.

“Fleury shall be taken care of. All the family send love. In this join the General and Mrs. Washington ; and what is best, it is not in the style of ceremony, but sincerity.”

The departure of D’Estaing leaving little prospect of active operations at the south, Laurens again rejoined the staff of Washington. On his return, he thus writes to his friend, from Philadelphia, where congress was in session.

LAURENS TO HAMILTON.

December 18, 1779.

MY DEAR HAMILTON,

On my arrival in town, I was informed by the President, that congress had suspended the business of appointing a secretary to their minister plenipotentiary at Versailles until my return, in hopes that I might still be prevailed upon to accept the office. I replied, that I thought my letter upon the subject sufficiently explicit, and assured him of my sincere desire to be excused from serving in that capacity at the present juncture of our affairs.

He urged the unanimity of the choice with respect to me — the difficulty of uniting the suffrages of all parties, in case of a new nomination, and the advantages of this union. Several delegates of congress declared to me the embarrassment of congress since I had declined. One, in particular, suggested to me his apprehension of interest being made for a late delegate of New-York, who is candidate for the office, and to whom the world in general allows greater credit for his abilities than his integrity ; and said, “he was determined to oppose him with all his influence.” When I quitted town the sixteenth, these matters crowded into my mind. I fell into a train of serious reflections and self-examination, —endeavoured to investigate whether I had acted consonantly to the *καλον και αγαθον*, and fulfilled the duties of a good citizen in the transaction. In fine, I agitated the grand

question, whether a citizen has a right to decline any office to which his countrymen appoint him ; upon what that right is founded, and whether it existed in my case.

After undergoing the severest conflict I ever experienced, sometimes reproaching, sometimes justifying myself, pursuing my journey, or turning retrograde, as the arguments on the one side or the other appeared to prevail, I determined that I had been deficient in the duties of a good citizen. I returned to Philadelphia, communicated my sentiments to the President and two other members ; declared to them that I thought it incumbent on me, in the first place, to recommend a person equally qualified in point of integrity, and much better in point of ability. That if, unhappily, they could not agree on Colonel Hamilton, and that I was absolutely necessary to exclude a dangerous person, or to prevent pernicious delays, I should think it my duty to obey the orders of congress. The persons now in nomination, are, Colonel Hamilton, Mr. Lovell, Mr. G. Morris, Major Stewart. Great stress is laid upon the ability and integrity of the person to be employed in this commission. I have given my testimony of you in this and the other equally essential points.

My love, as usual. Adieu.

JOHN LAURENS.

CHAPTER XI.

[1780.]

THE war of the revolution having become a war of finance, Hamilton, with a mind awakened to every exigency of the country, now directed his attention to the embarrassments of the treasury, and made his first effort in relation to its finances.

In connexion with this subject, a brief allusion to the state of the public credit, will not be deemed inappropriate. But for a better understanding of the national necessities, it may be proper to advert to the prospects of the country at this time.

We have seen the previous year pass away without any occurrences of moment, in a military aspect; and the only feature in the picture which engages the attention, is the reversed attitude of the belligerents. The Americans, no longer flying from a triumphant enemy, but seeking every opportunity to attack them; — the British, alarmed for their safety, tenaciously covering themselves under the protection of their fortifications, and rejoicing at the fluctuating counsels of the French, to which they were indebted for their security.

In the states north of the Potomac, the present year presents a spectacle of little variety. Amidst discomfiture, disaster, and local dissensions, it had been ascertained, that upon them no permanent impression could be made. Hoping that the alliance with France might be dissolved, encouraged by the distresses which its embarrassed finances had extended over the country, and which appeared to threaten an end of its resources, and stimulated by those feelings to which a proud and gallant nation would natu-

rally be aroused by the interference of a foreign power, in their domestic broils, the British ministry still maintained the contest with obstinacy, and determined to subjugate the southern states, in the vain hope, that as their sufferings would be greater, their patriotism might be less than that of their northern brethren.

The result of these attempts was seen in the capture of Charleston, after a gallant and protracted defence, and in the defeat of General Gates at Camden ; events which sustained the ministry, and enabled it to obtain a vote of credit for five-and-twenty millions sterling, to continue the war.

These occurrences, the disappointment which had followed the highly excited expectations from the co-operation of France, and the determination which had been manifested by the British government, to persevere in the conflict, induced a state of feeling in congress widely different from the delusive security which palsied their previous measures, and had led them to turn not only an inattentive, but an indignant ear to the urgent remonstrances of the commander-in-chief and his circle of friends, who still foresaw a long series of obstacles to be overcome, before their independence would be achieved.

The difficulty of raising troops, which had so often exposed the army to disgrace and destruction, had so often been surmounted by the energy of Washington, that, perplexing as it had been, it was but a minor evil compared with the alarming state of the finances, and the great and rapid depreciation of the currency, upon the issues of which congress were compelled principally to rely.

The report of the Board of Treasury, in the autumn of seventeen hundred and seventy-nine, had shown an emission of bills in circulation amounting to the enormous sum of one hundred and sixty millions of dollars, together with a public debt of near forty millions, in foreign and domestic loans ; while the whole product of the latter, from the commence-

ment of the war, had but little exceeded thirty millions, and of the taxes three millions.

With the faint hope of sustaining their credit, congress passed a vote, on the first of September of the same year, pledging themselves not to issue, in bills of credit, a sum exceeding two hundred millions; which they proclaimed to the country, accompanied with an exposition of the extent of the national resources, and an assurance that full confidence might be placed in the public faith.

The wants of the treasury had been so pressing, that intermediate this declaration, and the end of the following month of November, the balance of this limited sum was issued, and congress were left destitute even of this apparently last resource.

In this emergency, the committee of Ways and Means adopted, as the only remaining expedient, the negotiation of bills on the American envoys in Europe; which, through the recent advices of Monsieur De la Luzerne, they had reason to expect would be provided for by the aid of France.

The sale of these bills was directed to be made at the rate of twenty-five dollars in continental bills of credit, for four shillings and sixpence sterling, with the condition, that the purchasers should lend a sum equal to the cost of the bills, at an interest of six per cent.

In March, seventeen hundred and eighty, the loan which had been authorized on the basis of an advance of two month's interest to the lender, not being filled, a NEW EMISSION of bills was ordered, at the rate of forty for one, payable in six years, bearing an interest of five per cent., to be issued on the faith of the individual states, in proportion to their quotas, and a revision of the laws recommended, which rendered the continental bills a legal tender.*

* There were, at this time, three kinds of paper afloat: — one bearing an interest payable in sterling money, one an interest payable in currency, and the third without interest. The two first were called Loan Office Certificates,

These financial embarrassments, had given rise to scenes of extravagant, and, in many instances, profligate speculation. Going into the market with a currency stamped with disgrace, not only was government compelled to purchase below the fixed discount of their paper, and thus increase its discredit, but individuals, whose resources created confidence, came forward as competitors, and engrossed the supplies, which they dealt out to the administration on their own terms. Apprehensions of greater depreciation, inducing the holders of the paper to force it into the market, with a view to realize something intrinsically valuable, raised the price of every article; while many capitalists, unable to loan securely, withheld their funds from circulation.

The excitement produced by these circumstances, can now be with difficulty imagined. On the one hand, the most violent denunciations were uttered against “engrossers, forestallers and monopolizers,” on the other, outcries were raised against the public agents, who frequently abused their trust; an internal war ensued between debtor and creditor, threatening the most alarming consequences.*

and, like the bills of credit, were payable to bearer; but though resting on the same security, were in lower credit. To absorb this paper, it was proposed, in a series of ingenious essays, signed An American, to create a stock, redeemable by instalments after the war; but what circulating medium was to be substituted, and how the interest on this stock was to be discharged, it is believed was not shown.

* It is curious to remark the extravagant and crude schemes to which this state of things gave rise. Among others, it was proposed in Virginia to abolish all private commerce, and establish companies, including a state, or parts of one, in districts. The commercial operations to be represented by stock: the prices of every article to be fixed by the companies; and to confer on them the power of taking private goods into their custody. The project was recommended as a scheme for “*appreciating* the currency, and reducing the prices of necessaries.” It was soon followed by an embargo on provisions — July 17, 1780.

An enumeration of the flagrant oppressions which were quietly endured by

These were evils in a great degree necessarily incidental to the state of the country, with a small capital, and deprived of foreign commerce; but there were others wholly attributable to the feeble operation of the confederacy.

The administration of government by congress, through the medium of committees and boards, greatly augmented the civil expenditure; prevented the possibility of secrecy or system, and the numerous expedients which exigencies suggested, had resulted in the creation of various and conflicting chambers.

The Board of Treasury, which was established in seventeen hundred and seventy-six, had struggled through two years of confusion and delay; frequently changing its members, after which period were added to it the offices of comptroller, auditor, and treasurer, and two chambers of accounts. The duties of these were so defined, as to constitute them checks upon each other: there being, however, in no one, that superintendence which was necessary to a systematic management of the finances. A twelvemonth had not elapsed when it was found necessary to change this arrangement, and a new organization was adopted.

By this scheme, the Board of Treasury was composed of five commissioners, of whom three were permitted to hold their seats only six months in continuance, and the offices of auditor general, treasurer, two chambers of accounts, and six auditors, were substituted for the previous plan. To this complicated system it was afterwards deemed expedient to add an extra chamber of accounts. This last body had just commenced its operations, when the interference with the Board of Treasury in their respective duties, led

the people, from legislative interference with private rights, tender acts, and other encroachments, would be not a little interesting: the results of a government not dealing fairly with the people, and too feeble to enforce, or perhaps, even to respect good faith.

to the necessity of declaring that board paramount to all the other branches of the treasury department.

The delays attendant upon this state of things in settling the public accounts, added to the inconveniences which the condition of the currency had produced, and the fluctuating measures of the treasury, deprived it of all confidence, and gave sanction to the most crude and absurd schemes of finance.

The assurances which had been given to the new minister from France, of bringing into the field an army of five-and-twenty thousand men, had excited the greatest anxiety in congress to expedite the requisitions on the states. The recently proposed change in the currency was based on their co-operation ; and yet the legislatures of many of them adjourned without having delegated powers to any member of their governments to meet the propositions of congress ; and the returns of others, indicated a reluctant and tardy compliance with the urgent demands of the confederation.

As the pressure was more immediately felt at head quarters, the financial difficulties urged themselves upon the individuals there with peculiar force. The situation of Hamilton, in the family of Washington, rendering him the confidant of all the secret embarrassments of his chief, opened to him an enlarged view of the situation of the country ; and enforced upon him more strongly the necessity of decisive and immediate relief. His intimacy also with the French officers, enabled him to judge of the extent of their expectations, and led him to look forward with apprehension to a failure in the engagements with France, as an event which might, with other causes, lead, if not to an entire abandonment by our ally, to very partial and reluctant succours.

The recent debates in the British parliament, had also shown the strong hopes of the ministry, that the resources of the United States were nearly exhausted, and their expectation

that a continuance of the war might lead to a dissolution of the union, which the distempered state of some parts of the confederacy seemed at a distance to indicate as not improbable.

Influenced by these considerations, Colonel Hamilton, soon after the army had entered winter quarters at Morristown, addressed an anonymous letter to Robert Morris, then a delegate from Pennsylvania to Congress. In this letter he states his plan "to be the product of some reading on the subjects of commerce and finance, and of occasional reflections on our particular situation; but that a want of leisure had prevented its being examined in so many lights, and digested so maturely, as the importance requires." He requests, that if the outlines are thought worthy of attention, and any difficulties occur which demand explanations, that a letter should be directed to James Montague, to be lodged in the post office at Morristown; and that though the writer has reasons which make him unwilling to be known, if a personal conference should be thought material, that he would endeavour to comply, and asks the letter to be regarded as a hasty production.

In this letter, after giving as his reasons for not addressing him through the press, the extreme delicacy of the subject, and the effect of discussion in increasing the evil "by exposing our weak sides to the popular eye, and adding false terrors to well-founded apprehensions," he proceeds to examine the object of principal concern, — the state of the currency, — as to which he observes, that in his opinion, all the speculations of the country were founded in error, — combats the idea that the depreciation could have been avoided, and the impression which had been entertained that the money might be restored by expedients *within our own resources*; and to this dangerous and prevalent error he attributes the delay in attempting a foreign loan.

He shows that the badness of the money was originally the effect of the condition of the country, and of the exer-

tions made beyond its strength, and not the cause, though, at that time, it partook of the nature of both ; — that as prices rose, the value of money fell ; and that as the public expenditures became immense, no taxes which the people could bear on that quantity of money which is deemed a proper medium, would have been sufficient for the current demands of the nation, had it been gold instead of paper ; that the idea was chimerical, that without resorting to foreign loans, we could do otherwise than augment the quantity of our artificial wealth beyond those bounds which were proper to preserve its credit.

That the quantity of money in circulation, previous to the revolution, was about thirty millions of dollars, which was barely sufficient for our interior commerce, the foreign trade being carried on by barter ; and as the balance of our principal trade was against us, and the specie was transferred to meet that balance, no part of it entered into the home circulation ; and that it would have been impossible, by loans and taxes, to bring such part of it into the public coffers as would have served the purposes of the war, without obstructing commercial operations.

He next shows, that the product of the taxes, both from the peculiar situation of the country, and by reference to the condition of other countries, would necessarily be inadequate to our wants.

Hence he infers, that congress, when their emissions rose to thirty millions, were *obliged*, in order to keep up the supplies, to go on creating artificial revenues by new emissions ; and that the only remedy then was a foreign loan, which judiciously applied, and assisted by a vigorous taxation, would have created a credit that might have prevented the excess of emissions. He contends, on the same principles, that in proportion to the extent of the depreciation at that time, was the impossibility of raising the money value by any other means, and that in the existing situation of the country, a FOREIGN LOAN was the only expedient.

He adds, “these reasonings may prove useless, as the necessity of a loan is admitted, but *that his object is to establish good principles*, the want of which has brought us to the desperate crisis we have arrived at, and may betray us into fatal mistakes.”

The next inquiry raised is, — How is the loan to be employed? — Two plans were stated to have been in contemplation: — one, that of buying up the paper, which he shows would have been impracticable, from the rapid artificial appreciation of it, which would require means far beyond the compass of the national resources, while this appreciation would be more relative to the purchasing medium, than to the prices of commodities, as the value of the paper might be raised by the combination of individuals, while the reduction of prices must necessarily be slow, depending, as it would, on the sentiments of the great body of the people.

The result of this plan, he states, would be “that the money would return into circulation almost as fast as it was drawn out, and at the end of the year the treasury would be completely empty; — the foreign loan dissipated, and the state of the finances as deplorable as ever. It would be much better, instead of purchasing up the paper currency, to purchase the supplies with the specie or bills.” — “A great source of error,” he observes, “in disquisitions of this nature, is the judging of events by abstract calculations, which, though geometrically true, are false as they relate to the concerns of beings governed more by passion and prejudice, than by an enlightened sense of their interests. A degree of illusion mixes itself in all the affairs of society. The opinion of objects has more influence than their real nature. The quantity of money in circulation, is certainly a chief cause of its declining; but we find it is depreciated more than five times as much as it ought to be: — the excess is derived from opinion. — a want of confidence. In like manner, we deceive ourselves, when we suppose the

value will increase in proportion as the quantity is lessened; opinion will operate here also, and a thousand circumstances may promote or counteract the principle."

The other plan proposed, was to convert the loan into merchandise, and import it on public account. This plan, though better than the former, he deems also liable to great objections, but not wholly to be rejected; and after suggesting a tax in kind, he contends, that "the only plan which can preserve the currency, is one that will make it the immediate interest of the moneyed men to co-operate with government in its support. This country is in the same predicament in which France was previous to the famous Mississippi scheme, projected by Mr. Law. Its paper money, like ours, had dwindled to nothing, and no efforts of the government could revive it, because the people had lost all confidence in its ability. Mr. Law, who had much more penetration than integrity, readily perceived that no plan could succeed, which did not unite the interest and credit of rich individuals with those of the state; and upon this he framed the idea of his project, which so far agreed in principle with the Bank of England, — the foundation was good, but the superstructure too vast. The projectors aimed at unlimited wealth, and the government itself expected too much, which was the cause of the ultimate miscarriage of the scheme, and of all the mischiefs that befel the kingdom in consequence. It will be our wisdom to select what is good in this plan, and in any others that have gone before us, avoiding their defects and excesses. Something on a similar principle in America, will alone accomplish the restoration of paper credit, and establish a permanent fund for the future exigencies of government."

He then states his plan to be an American bank, to be instituted by congress for ten years, under the denomination of "The Bank of the United States."

The basis of this bank was to be a foreign loan of two

millions sterling, to be thrown into the bank as a part of its stock; a subscription to be opened in the currency of two hundred millions of dollars, and the subscribers to be incorporated; the payment of which to be guarantied by the government on the dissolution of the bank, by ten millions of specie, being at the rate of one for twenty, or by a currency bona fide equivalent, and the annual money taxes to become part of the stock.

All the remaining paper to be called in, (at the option of the possessor,) and bank notes to be issued in lieu of it for so much sterling, payable to the bearer in three months from the date, at two per cent. per annum interest; a pound sterling to be estimated at two hundred and sixty-six and two-thirds of the existing dollars;* the interest payable punctually in specie at the end of the three months, when the possessor might have the bank notes renewed, or receive the sum deposited in the old paper; all the money issued from the bank to be of the same denomination, and on the same terms.

An annual loan of two millions sterling to be furnished to congress by the bank, at four per cent., and the whole, or part of the stock, by arrangement between the bank and a Board of Trade, which he contemplated, to be employed in commerce. If only a part, the residue to be loaned occasionally, by permission of congress, in such sums as may be thought expedient, at an interest of six per cent., on private securities; the government to hold one half of the stock, and the bank to be managed by trustees of the stockholders, under the inspection of the Board of Trade.

The part of the manuscript which details the effect of the commercial operations, is mutilated; but the result is stated to be, that the war might be carried on three years, and the government incur a debt of only four hundred and

* Sixty dollars for one dollar of four shillings and sixpence sterling.

twenty thousand pounds sterling, above the guaranty of the subscription, which it is probable would not be required, as the corporation would find it their interest to obtain a renewal of their charter.

Having presented his plan, he observes, "that he does not believe that its advantages will be as great as they appear in speculation, from a less profitable commerce than is supposed, and from other causes. I am aware how apt the imagination is to be heated in projects of this nature, and to overlook the fallacies which often lurk in first principles. But when I consider, on the other hand, that this scheme stands on the firm footing of public and private faith, that it links the interest of the state in an intimate connexion with those of the rich individuals belonging to it; that it turns the wealth and influence of both into a commercial channel for mutual benefit, which must afford advantages not to be estimated; that there is a defect of a circulating medium, which this plan supplies by a sort of creative power, converting what is so produced, into a real and efficacious instrument of trade; I say, when I consider these things, and many more that might be added, I cannot forbear feeling a degree of confidence in the plan, and at least hoping that it is capable of being improved into something that will give relief to our finances."

To enlarge its advantages, he suggests that a variety of secondary expedients may be invented, and the whole scheme of annuities engrafted upon it.

That the European loan might be converted into a European bank, to aid the American bank, by engaging the interests of the wealthy, and that the bank might also make contracts with the government for the supplies of the army, on terms mutually beneficial. He then expatiates on the reasons for giving one half of the stock to the government, and answers the objection that the plan might be prejudicial to

trade, by proposing a guaranty from the government not to grant any monopolies.

To the scheme, notes are appended, explanatory of the operation of the project; in one of which he states, "a Board of Trade ought immediately to be established. The royal council of France, and the subordinate chambers in each province, form an excellent institution, and may, in many respects, prove a model. Congress have too long neglected to institute a good scheme of administration, and throw public business into proper executive departments. For commerce, I prefer a board; but for most other things, single men. We want a Minister of War, a Minister of Foreign Affairs, a Minister of Finance, and a Minister of Marine. There is always more decision, more despatch, more secrecy, and more responsibility where single men, than where bodies are concerned. By a plan of this kind, we should blend the advantages of a monarchy and of a republic, in a happy and beneficial union. Men will only devote their lives and attention to a profession on which they can build reputation and consequence, which they do not share with others. If this plan should be approved, congress ought immediately to appoint a Minister of Finance. He ought to be a man of ability, to comprehend it in all its consequences, and of eloquence to make others comprehend and relish it. He ought, besides, to have some general knowledge of the science, and to address himself to some of the most suitable moneyed men, to convince them of the utility of the project. The congress must establish the bank, and set it agoing. I know of no man that has better pretensions than yourself, and shall be very happy to hear that congress have said, 'Thou art the man.'"

The first essay of an individual, who has been designated as "the Founder of the public credit of the United States," will have interest, (although his project was not adopted in all its parts,) as evincing the progressive growth of his mind.

At a time when the intricate science of finance was little understood in the United States, the statesman will perceive the clear and sound views which are taken of the condition of the currency ; and will remark, with admiration, how far the author of this plan rose above all the crude opinions of that day ; rejecting the whole scheme of legislative expedients, and pointing out, as the only basis of a permanent system, the combination of public with private capital. It has been observed, that this project was not embraced in all its parts ; but it had, nevertheless, its influence on the mind of the eminent financier of the revolution ; for within a short time after, a plan of a bank in Pennsylvania was introduced by him, founded on private contributions, to the amount of £300,000 sterling, by patriotic individuals, to furnish the army with a temporary supply of provisions, which, though limited in its views, led on to farther results of moment. The idea of executive departments, also, from this time, became a topic of discussion in congress ; which, as will be seen hereafter, was more earnestly pressed upon the consideration of that body by him, and was ultimately adopted, almost in the terms proposed by Hamilton.

A question has been recently raised, as to the merit of having first suggested an American bank. It would be idle to allege, that with similar institutions existing in Europe, it was not a topic frequently adverted to by thinking men in America ; and there is found, within a short time after the date of Hamilton's communication, a suggestion, in a gazette of Massachusetts, of the Bank of Amsterdam as a model for such an institution ; but the most careful researches show, that Hamilton's first revolutionary plan had more than a twelvemonth's priority* over that of the Superin-

* This remark refers to the *Bank of North America*. Hamilton's first plan was addressed to Robert Morris, in 1779. The Bank of Pennsylvania was

tendent of finance, of which the merit is claimed by his assistant.*

Although the idea of a bank, with powers to carry on commercial operations, may be regarded with some distrust, and the extent of the plan may be supposed to derogate from its merit, yet a careful examination of this scheme will show, that it was the only one, proposed at that time, which could have absorbed the depreciated paper, and have restored a sound currency ; which the other projects could not have effected. The idea of using the credit of government in mercantile adventures, which is the only objectional part of the scheme, as a general one, was peculiarly felicitous at the time it was suggested, and might have been instrumental in producing a uniform system of commercial regulations. As a mere temporary expedient, it did not escape the vigilant observation of Robert Morris, who entered into several commercial adventures, on account of the United States, to pay the interest on the foreign debt, which proved a great convenience to the treasury, and resulted in a small profit to the government.

During the series of military disasters at the south, the sufferings of the army at Morristown, in a winter of memorable severity, baffle description ; — a post from which, in the reduced numbers of his men, Washington could not move with safety, and which possessed advantages that more than counterbalanced the inconvenience of its rugged and snow-clad hills. These sufferings were much increased by the introduction of a new system of requisitions, and by a most unwise interference with the civil staff of the army,

reported to congress June 22d, 1780. The Bank of North America, it will be subsequently seen, was proposed by Robert Morris, in May, 1781.

* Mr. G. Morris was appointed assistant to R. Morris, July 6th, 1781. It is stated, in a letter of Mr. G. Morris to a friend — “The first bank in this country was planned by your humble servant.” — *Life of G. Morris*, vol. i, p. 235.

which led to the resignation of General Greene, as quarter-master-general.

To meet this emergency, a committee was appointed by congress, to confer with the commander-in-chief, of which General Schuyler was the leading member. This gentleman, disgusted with the injuries he had received, after the sentence of a court martial, (which was long cruelly withheld from his most urgent solicitations,) acquitting him of all misconduct, and declaring that he was entitled to the highest honours,* had been recently returned to congress; having determined never more to fill any other stations than such as were derived directly from the people, to whom he chose only to be responsible. His arrival in camp was welcomed by Washington, with all the ardour of devoted friendship; and the result of their conferences, aided by General Greene, was a plan investing the commander-in-chief with powers adequate to the exigency. But an over-cautious congress withheld from him a trust, which had been before exercised with unexampled moderation, and with infinite public advantage.†

The golden opportunity of regaining New-York was thus lost; and Washington, with victory in his grasp, was compelled to submit to the insulting inroads of the enemy, from a want of means to put his little army in motion. But even thus situated, he was unwilling to be inactive; and learning that a body of the enemy was stationed at Staten Island, he despatched Lord Stirling to attack them, accompanied

* Mr. Jay, in a letter of February 12th, 1778, says: "Congress has refused to accept your resignation. Twelve states are represented; New-England and Pennsylvania against you. The delegates of the latter are new men, and not free from the influence of the former. From New-York, south, you have fast friends. I have the best authority to assure you, the commander-in-chief wishes you to retain your commission."

† And yet, soon after, martial law was proclaimed in Pennsylvania, (June 9th, 1780,) in order to enable the state officers to procure supplies, and to drive strangers from Philadelphia.

by Colonel Hamilton to aid in the execution of the project. But it appears, from a letter of the latter, written on the night selected for the attack, that the ice at Bergen Point was impassable ; and the expedition returned, without having effected any thing of moment.

The situation of the prisoners being still a source of great disquietude, Hamilton was sent on a commission, with General St. Clair and Colonel Carrington, (with the latter of whom he maintained an intimacy through life, founded on the highest respect for his character and abilities,) to meet certain British commissioners at Amboy.

He writes thence, on the seventeenth of March, "that the enemy, as was supposed, had no idea of treating on mutual ground ; that the commission was broken up ; and that they were in private conversation, entertaining hopes that the liberation of our prisoners would be effected on admissible terms." This desirable result was not attained.

The sufferings of the army now produced an effect which had long been apprehended. "Two regiments of Connecticut paraded under arms, with a declared resolution to return home, or obtain subsistence at the point of the bayonet. The interference of the officers, and decisive measures, soon suppressed the mutiny ; a discovery was made, that they had been tampered with by the enemy, who, hoping to take advantage of their supposed disaffection, moved a force suddenly to Springfield."* To counteract this movement, General Greene was sent forward by General Washington, and Hamilton was directed to reconnoitre. The battle of Springfield ensued, "in which the veteran Knyphausen was baffled and almost beaten, by the gallantry of Greene, at the head of a force of continentals and militia, amounting to little more than a third of the enemy,"† — the last of his distinguished achievements at the north.

* Chief Justice Marshall.

† Colonel Hamilton's Eulogium.

The anxiety produced by the discontents of the army, and the views entertained at head quarters of the national prospects, are strongly depicted in a letter transmitted by the commander-in-chief to Messrs. Schuyler and Peabody, a committee of congress. After a few preliminary observations, it states: "The view given of our situation by congress, is just, full, and explicit. The measures they have recommended are well adapted to the emergency, and of indispensable necessity. I very freely give it as my opinion, that unless they are carried into execution, in the fullest extent, and with the greatest decision and rapidity, it will be impossible for us to undertake the intended co-operation with any reasonable prospect of success.

"The consequences you have well delineated. The succour designed for our benefit will prove a serious misfortune; and instead of rescuing us from the embarrassments we experience, and from the danger with which we are threatened, will, in all probability, precipitate our ruin. Drained and weakened as we already are, the exertions we shall make, though they may be too imperfect to secure success, will at any rate be such as to leave us in a state of relaxation and debility, from which it will be difficult, if not impracticable, to recover. The country exhausted, the people disheartened, the consequence and reputation of these states in Europe sunk, — our friends chagrined and discouraged, our enemies deriving new credit, new confidence, and new resources, — we have not, nor ought we to wish, an alternative. The court of France has done so much that we must make a decisive effort on our part. Our situation demands it, — 'tis expected. We have the means to success, without some unforeseen accident; and it only remains to employ them. But the conjuncture requires all our wisdom, and all our energy. Such is the present state of this country, that the utmost exertion of its resources, though equal, is not more than equal, to the

object, and our measures must be so taken as to call them into immediate and full effect." After some observations, indicating the necessity of obtaining a larger supply of men, it is stated: "Unless the principal part of the force be composed of men regularly organized, and on the continuance of whose services we can rely, nothing decisive can be attempted. The militia are too precarious a dependence to justify such an attempt, where they form a particular part of the plan. Militia cannot have the necessary habits, nor the consistency, either for an assault or a siege. In employing them essentially, we should run the risk of being abandoned in the most critical moments.

"The mode by draft is, I am persuaded, the only efficacious one to obtain men. It appears to me certain, that it is the only one to obtain them in time; nor can the period you have appointed for bringing them into the field be delayed, without defeating the object. I have little doubt, that at any time, and much less at the present juncture, the power of government, exerted with confidence, will be equal to the purpose of drafting. The hopes of the people, elevated by the prospect before them, will induce a cheerful compliance with this and all the other measures of vigour which have been recommended, and which the exigency requires."

Similar views were, with the greatest solemnity, and most eloquently, presented to congress throughout the year.

The anticipated reinforcements from France, to which this extract refers, and which excited the expectations of the country to so great a degree, arrived off the coast early in July.

Soon after the intelligence was received at head quarters, a letter was addressed to the committee of co-operation, stating, "that the *Guadaloupe* had arrived in New-York, and brought an account that she had fallen in with a large French fleet, consisting of several sail of the line, and a num-

ber of transports, between the Capes of Virginia and Delaware. This intelligence has every appearance of authenticity ; and, if true, the arrival of the fleet on the coast may instantly be looked for. This, indeed, must be the case at any rate from the time they are said to have sailed. It cannot be too much lamented, that our preparations are still so greatly behind hand ; not a thousand men, that I have heard of, have yet joined the army, and in all probability the period for commencing our operations is at hand. I am happy to learn, that a spirit of animation has diffused itself throughout the states, from which we may expect the happiest consequences. But the exigency is so pressing, that we ought to multiply our efforts, to give new activity and despatch to our measures ; levying and forwarding the men, providing the supplies of every sort required ; forage and transportation, demand particular attention. After what had been preconcerted with the honourable the congress, after two month's previous notice of the intended succour, if our allies find us unprepared, and are obliged to wait several weeks in a state of inaction, it is easy to conceive how unfavourable will be the impressions, which if improved with all the vigour in our power, is less than were to be wished for an undertaking of so arduous and important a nature. So much is at stake, — so much to be hoped, — so much to be lost, that we shall be inexcusable if we do not employ all our zeal and all our exertion."

The arrival of these reinforcements awakened a new interest to effect a descent on New-York.

A plan of operations was immediately forwarded to Cape Henry, with a communication, apprizing the French commanders, Rochambeau and De Ternay, of the naval force and position of the enemy ; indicating a station off Sandy Hook for the purpose of intercepting the troops which had embarked at Charleston on their return to New-York, and proposing a combined attack on that place.

Intelligence being received of the arrival of Admiral Greaves, a letter was prepared by Colonel Hamilton, urging the French commanders, in case of the superiority of their force, still to proceed to Sandy Hook ; in which he states, that later information had led them to believe that the harbour of New-York was more practicable than had been supposed, and strongly inciting them by "the greater glory which would be derived from overcoming increased difficulties," to adhere to the original plan. The French were, however, unwilling to encounter the enemy, and made sail for Newport ; whither Sir Henry Clinton, apprehensive of losing it, made a rapid movement. Washington, on his departure, instantly pushed for New-York, when Clinton suddenly returning, the Americans recrossed the Hudson. From this period, the respective armies retired to their former quarters, the Americans waiting farther reinforcements from France.

The uncertain counsels which seemed to have governed the French commanders, and the course of the correspondence with them from head quarters, notwithstanding the mission of La Fayette to Newport, rendered a personal interview between them and Washington desirable, in order to efface an impression entertained by Rochambeau, that his communications had received less attention than he imagined them entitled to ; — a measure which Hamilton advised, influenced by letters from Colonel Fleury.

With this view, General Washington having ordered General Greene to move to Tappan, in order to protect West Point, proceeded with La Fayette, Hamilton, and McHenry, to meet the Count and Admiral at Hartford, on the twentieth of September.

The arrival of Rodney, rendering the projected attack on New-York impracticable, it was reluctantly abandoned ; and after some general conversation as to the probable strength of the reinforcements, and the policy of their future

operations, the commanders returned to their respective quarters.

During this journey, an event occurred which threatened the most alarming consequences to the country, and was attended with circumstances of the deepest interest.

As Washington and La Fayette were returning from Hartford, the former proposed to visit some works which had been recently erected, and as General Arnold, who had command at West Point, was waiting breakfast for them, Hamilton and McHenry proceeded to his quarters, at the house of Mr. Beverley Robinson, to announce the approach of the General.

While they were sitting at table, Arnold received a note, stating the arrest of Major André. He immediately left the table, ran up stairs, mentioned the event to his wife, and left her, though fainting, under the pretence of preparing for the reception of the commander-in-chief at West Point.

The General and a part of his suite learning Mrs. Arnold's indisposition before they entered the house, embarked for the Point, and were astonished to find that Arnold was not there. During their absence, Colonel Hamilton received the papers which had been despatched from the lines in quest of the commander-in-chief, and sent him the alarming tidings. Hamilton and McHenry rode instantly to the water's edge in pursuit of the traitor, who had, by this time, proceeded some distance in a barge, which conveyed him on board the Vulture, whence he addressed an audacious letter to Washington.

Irritated and appalled as Washington was, his first thought was to send a message to Mrs. Arnold, stating that although his duty had rendered it necessary to endeavour to capture her husband, he found pleasure in soothing her sorrows, by the assurance that he was safe ; while Hamilton wrote to General Greene, who was uninformed of the extent of the treason, to put his army under marching orders.

“The feelings of the whole army,” says La Fayette, from whom these incidents are derived, “were most liberal in behalf of André; but none was more impressed with those sentiments of generosity and sympathy than Colonel Hamilton. He was daily searching some way to save him. Every wish to that effect having proved impossible, Hamilton, who was as sensible as any other of that impossibility, and one of those who lamented it the most, published a narrative of the events, and a portraiture of the unfortunate André, which is a masterpiece of literary talents and amiable sensibility.” As it embraces all the essential circumstances of this interesting scene, and has been erroneously published, it may not improperly be introduced into the biography of its author.

HAMILTON TO LAURENS.

Since my return from Hartford, my dear Laurens, my mind has been too little at ease to permit me to write to you sooner. It has been wholly occupied by the affecting and tragic consequences of Arnold’s treason. My feelings were never put to so severe a trial. You will no doubt have heard the principal facts before this reaches you; but there are particulars to which my situation gave me access, that cannot have come to your knowledge from public report, which I am persuaded you will find interesting.

From several circumstances, the project seems to have originated with Arnold himself, and to have been long premeditated. The first overture is traced back to some time in June last. It was conveyed in a letter to Colonel Robinson, the substance of which was, that the ingratitude he had experienced from his country, concurring with other causes, had entirely changed his principles; that he now only sought to restore himself to the favour of his king, by some signal proof of his repentance, and would be happy to open a correspondence with Sir Henry Clinton for that

purpose. About this period he made a journey to Connecticut ; on his return from which to Philadelphia, he solicited the command of West Point, alleging that the effects of his wound had disqualified him for the active duties of the field. The sacrifice of this important post was the atonement he intended to make. General Washington hesitated the less to gratify an officer who had rendered such eminent services, as he was convinced the post might be safely entrusted to one who had given so many distinguished proofs of his bravery. In the beginning of August he joined the army, and renewed his application. The enemy at this juncture had embarked the greatest part of their force on an expedition to Rhode-Island, and our army was in motion to compel them to relinquish the enterprise or to attack New-York in its weakened state. The General offered Arnold the left wing of the army, which he declined, on the pretext already mentioned, but not without visible embarrassment. He certainly might have executed the duties of such a temporary command, and it was expected from his enterprising temper, that he would gladly have embraced so splendid an opportunity. But he did not choose to be diverted a moment from his favourite object ; probably from an apprehension, that some different disposition might have taken place which would have excluded him. The extreme solicitude he discovered to get possession of the post, would have led to a suspicion of the treachery, had it been possible, from his past conduct, to have supposed him capable of it.

The correspondence thus began, was carried on between Arnold and Major André, Adjutant General to the British army, in behalf of Sir Henry Clinton, under feigned signatures, and in a mercantile disguise. In an intercepted letter of Arnold, which lately fell into our hands, he proposes an interview "to settle the risks and profits of the copartnership," and in the same style of metaphor intimates an expected aug-

mentation of the garrison, and speaks of it as the means of extending their traffic. It appears by another letter, that André was to have met him on the lines, under the sanction of a flag, in the character of Mr. John Anderson. But some cause or other, not known, prevented this interview.

The twentieth of last month, Robinson and André went up the river in the Vulture sloop of war. Robinson sent a flag to Arnold with two letters, one to General Putnam, enclosed in another to himself, proposing an interview with Putnam, or in his absence with Arnold, to adjust some private concerns. The one to General Putnam was evidently meant as a cover to the other, in case, by accident, the letters should have fallen under the inspection of a third person.

General Washington crossed the river on his way to Hartford, the day these despatches arrived. Arnold, conceiving he must have heard of the flag, thought it necessary, for the sake of appearances, to submit the letters to him, and ask his opinion of the propriety of complying with the request. The General, with his usual caution, though without the least surmise of the design, dissuaded him from it, and advised him to reply to Robinson, that whatever related to his private affairs must be of a civil nature, and could only properly be addressed to the civil authority. This reference fortunately deranged the plan, and was the first link in the chain of events that led to the detection. The interview could no longer take place in the form of a flag, but was obliged to be managed in a secret manner.

Arnold employed one Smith to go on board the Vulture the night of the twenty-second, to bring André on shore with a pass for Mr. John Anderson. André came ashore accordingly, and was conducted within a picket of ours to the house of Smith, where Arnold and he remained together in close conference all that night and the day following.

At day light in the morning, the commanding officer at King's Ferry, without the privity of Arnold, moved a couple of pieces of cannon to a point opposite to where the Vulture lay, and obliged her to take a more remote station. This event, or some lurking distrust, made the boatmen refuse to convey the two passengers back, and disconcerted Arnold so much, that by one of those strokes of infatuation which often confound the schemes of men conscious of guilt, he insisted on André's exchanging his uniform for a disguise, and returning in a mode different from that in which he came. André, who had been undesignedly brought within our posts, in the first instance, remonstrated warmly against this new and dangerous expedient. But Arnold, persisting in declaring it impossible for him to return as he came, he at length reluctantly yielded to his direction, and consented to change his dress, and take the route he recommended. Smith furnished the disguise, and in the evening passed King's Ferry with him, and proceeded to Crompond, where they stopped the remainder of the night, (at the instance of a militia officer,) to avoid being suspected by him. The next morning they resumed their journey, Smith accompanying André a little beyond Pine's Bridge, where he left him. He had reached Tarrytown, when he was taken up by three militia men, who rushed out of the woods, and seized his horse. At this critical moment, his presence of mind forsook him. Instead of producing his pass, which would have extricated him from our parties, and could have done him no harm with his own, he asked the militia men if they were of the upper or lower party, distinctive appellations known among the refugee corps. The militia men replied, they were of the lower party; upon which he told them he was a British officer, and pressed them not to detain him as he was upon urgent business. This confession removed all doubt; and it was in vain he afterwards produced his pass. He was instantly forced off

to a place of greater security ; where, after a careful search, there were found concealed in the feet of his stockings, several papers of importance delivered to him by Arnold. Among these there were a plan of the fortifications of West Point, a memorial from the engineer on the attack and defence of the place, returns of the garrison, cannon, and stores, copy of the minutes of a council of war held by General Washington a few weeks before. The prisoner at first was inadvertently ordered to Arnold ; but on recollection, while still on the way, he was countermanded and sent to Old Salem.

The papers were enclosed in a letter to General Washington, which having taken a route different from that by which he returned, made a circuit, that afforded leisure for another letter, through an ill-judged delicacy, written to Arnold, with information of Anderson's capture, to get to him an hour before General Washington arrived at his quarters, time enough to elude the fate that awaited him. He went down the river in his barge to the Vulture, with such precipitate confusion, that he did not take with him a single paper useful to the enemy. On the first notice of the affair he was pursued, but much too late to be overtaken.

There was some colour for imagining it was a part of the plan to betray the General into the hands of the enemy : Arnold was very anxious to ascertain from him the precise day of his return, and the enemy's movement seem to have corresponded to this point. But if it was really the case, it was very injudicious. The success must have depended on surprise, and as the officers at the advanced posts were not in the secret, their measures might have given the alarm, and General Washington, taking the command of the post, might have rendered the whole scheme abortive. Arnold, it is true, had so dispersed the garrison as to have made a defence difficult, but not impracticable ;

and the acquisition of West Point was of such magnitude to the enemy, that it would have been unwise to connect it with any other object, however great, which might make the obtaining of it precarious.

Arnold, a moment before his setting out, went into Mrs. Arnold's apartment, and informed her that some transactions had just come to light, which must forever banish him from his country. She fell into a swoon at this declaration, and he left her in it to consult his own safety, till the servants, alarmed by her cries, came to her relief. She remained frantic all day, accusing every one who approached her with an intention to murder her child, (an infant in her arms,) and exhibiting every other mark of the most genuine and agonizing distress. Exhausted by the fatigue and tumult of her spirits, her phrenzy subsided towards evening, and she sunk into all the sadness of affliction. It was impossible not to have been touched with her situation; every thing affecting in female tears, or in the misfortunes of beauty, every thing pathetic in the wounded tenderness of a wife, or in the apprehensive fondness of a mother, and, till I have reason to change the opinion, I will add, every thing amiable in suffering innocence, conspired to make her an object of sympathy to all who were present. She experienced the most delicate attentions, and every friendly office, till her departure for Philadelphia.

André was, without loss of time, conducted to the headquarters of the army, where he was immediately brought before a board of general officers, to prevent all possibility of misrepresentation or cavil on the part of the enemy.

The board reported that he ought to be considered as a spy, and according to the laws and usages of nations, to suffer death, which was executed two days after.

Never, perhaps, did any man suffer death with more justice, or deserve it less. The first step he took after his

capture, was to write a letter to General Washington, conceived in terms of dignity, without insolence, and apology without meanness. The scope of it was to vindicate himself from the imputation of having assumed a mean character, for treacherous or interested purposes; asserting that he had been involuntarily an impostor; that contrary to his intention, which was to meet a person for intelligence on neutral ground, he had been betrayed within our posts, and forced into the vile condition of an enemy in disguise; soliciting only that to whatever rigour policy might devote him, a decency of treatment might be observed due to a person who, though unfortunate, had been guilty of nothing dishonourable. His request was granted in its full extent; for in the whole progress of the affair, he was treated with the most scrupulous delicacy. When brought before the board of officers, he met with every mark of indulgence, and was required to answer no interrogatory which would even embarrass his feelings. On his part, while he carefully concealed every thing that might implicate others, he frankly confessed all the facts relating to himself, and upon his confession, without the trouble of examining a witness, the board made their report. The members were not more impressed with the candour and firmness, mixed with a becoming sensibility which he displayed, than he was penetrated with their liberality and politeness. He acknowledged the generosity of the behaviour towards him in every respect, but particularly in this, in the strongest terms of manly gratitude. In a conversation with a gentleman who visited him after his trial, he said, he flattered himself he had never been illiberal; but if there were any remains of prejudice in his mind, his present experience must obliterate them.

In one of the visits I made to him, (and I saw him several times during his confinement,) he begged me to be the bearer of a request to the General, for permission to

send an open letter to Sir Henry Clinton. "I foresee my fate," said he, "and though I pretend not to play the hero, or to be indifferent about life, yet I am reconciled to whatever may happen, conscious that misfortune, not guilt, has brought it upon me. There is only one thing that disturbs my tranquillity. Sir Henry Clinton has been too good to me; he has been lavish of his kindness; I am bound to him by too many obligations, and love him too well to bear the thought that he should reproach himself, or others should reproach him, on the supposition of my having conceived myself obliged, by his instructions, to run the risk I did. I would not, for the world, leave a sting in his mind that should embitter his future days." He could scarce finish the sentence; bursting into tears, in spite of his efforts to suppress them, and with difficulty collected himself enough afterwards to add, "I wish to be permitted to assure him, I did not act under this impression, but submitted to a necessity imposed upon me, as contrary to my own inclination, as to his orders." His request was readily complied with, and he wrote the letter annexed, with which I dare say you will be as much pleased as I am, both for the sentiment and diction.

When his sentence was announced to him, he remarked, that since it was his lot to die, there was still a choice in the mode, which would make a material difference to his feelings; and he would be happy, if possible, to be indulged with a professional death. He made a second application by letter, in concise but persuasive terms. It was thought this indulgence, being incompatible with the customs of war, could not be granted; and it was, therefore, determined, in both cases, to evade an answer, to spare him the sensations, which a certain knowledge of the intended mode would inflict.

In going to the place of execution, he bowed familiarly as he went along, to all those with whom he had been acquaint-

ed in his confinement. A smile of complacency expressed the serene fortitude of his mind. Arrived at the fatal spot, he asked, with some emotion, "must I then die in this manner?" He was told it had been unavoidable. "I am reconciled to my fate, (said he,) but not to the mode." Soon, however, recollecting himself, he added, "it will be but a momentary pang;" and springing upon the cart, performed the last offices to himself, with a composure that excited the admiration and melted the hearts of the beholders. Upon being told the final moment was at hand, and asked if he had any thing to say, he answered, "nothing, but to request you will witness to the world, that I die like a brave man." Among the extraordinary circumstances that attended him, in the midst of his enemies he died universally regretted, and universally esteemed.

There was something singularly interesting in the character and fortunes of André. To an excellent understanding, well improved by education and travel, he united a peculiar elegance of mind and manners, and the advantage of a pleasing person. It is said, he possessed a pretty taste for the fine arts, and had himself attained some proficiency in poetry, music, and painting. His knowledge appeared without ostentation, and embellished by a diffidence that rarely accompanies so many talents and accomplishments, which left you to suppose more than appeared.

His sentiments were elevated, and inspired esteem;—they had a softness that conciliated affection. His elocution was handsome; his address easy, polite, and insinuating. By his merit, he had acquired the unlimited confidence of his General, and was making a rapid progress in military rank and reputation. But in the height of his career, flushed with new hopes from the execution of a project the most beneficial to his party that could be devised, he was at once precipitated from the summit of prosperity,

and saw all the expectations of his ambition blasted, and himself ruined.

The character I have given of him, is drawn partly from what I saw of him myself, and partly from information. I am aware, that a man of real merit is never seen in so favourable a light as through the medium of adversity. The clouds that surround him are shades that set off his good qualities. Misfortune cuts down the little vanities, that in prosperous times serve as so many spots in his virtues, and gives a tone of humility that makes his worth more amiable. His spectators, who enjoy a happier lot, are less prone to detract from it through envy ; and are more disposed by compassion to give him the credit he deserves, and perhaps even to magnify it.

I speak not of André's conduct in this affair as a philosopher, but as a man of the world. The authorized maxims and practices of war are the satires of human nature. They countenance almost every species of seduction, as well as violence ; and the General who can make most traitors in the army of his adversary is frequently most applauded. On this scale we acquit André, while we would not but condemn him if we were to examine his conduct by the sober rules of philosophy and moral rectitude. It is, however, a blemish on his fame, that he once intended to prostitute a flag, — about this, a man of nice honour ought to have had a scruple ; but the temptation was great. Let his misfortunes cast a veil over his error.

Several letters from Sir Henry Clinton, and others, were received in the course of the affair, feebly attempting to prove that André came out under the protection of a flag, with a passport from a general officer in actual service ; and consequently, could not be justly detained. Clinton sent a deputation, composed of Lieutenant General Robinson, Mr. Elliot, and Mr. William Smith, to represent, as he said, the true state of Major André's case. General Greene met

Robinson, and had a conversation with him, in which he reiterated the pretence of a flag, urged André's release as a personal favour to Sir Henry Clinton, and offered any friend of ours in their power in exchange. Nothing could have been more frivolous than the plea which was used. The fact was, that besides the time, manner, object of the interview, change of dress, and other circumstances, there was not a single formality customary with flags; and the passport was not to Major André, but to Mr. Anderson. But had there been, on the contrary, all the formalities, it would be an abuse of language to say, that the sanction of a flag, for corrupting an officer to betray his trust, ought to be respected. So unjustifiable a purpose would not only destroy its validity, but make it an aggravation.

André himself has answered the argument, by ridiculing and exploding the idea, in his examination before the board of officers. It was a weakness to urge it.

There was, in truth, no way of saving him. Arnold or he must have been the victim; the former was out of our power.

It was by some suspected, Arnold had taken his measures in such a manner, that if the interview had been discovered in the act, it might have been in his power to sacrifice André to his own security. This surmise of double treachery, made them imagine Clinton would be induced to give up Arnold for André; and a gentleman took occasion to suggest the expedient to the latter, as a thing that might be proposed by him. He declined it. The moment he had been capable of so much frailty, I should have ceased to esteem him.

The infamy of Arnold's conduct, previous to his desertion, is only equalled by his baseness since. Besides the folly of writing to Sir Henry Clinton, that André had acted under a passport from him, and according to his directions, while commanding officer at a post, and that, therefore, he did not

doubt he would be immediately sent in, he had the effrontery to write to General Washington in the same spirit, with the addition of a menace of retaliation, if the sentence should be carried into execution. He has since acted the farce of sending in his resignation. This man is, in every sense, despicable. In addition to the scene of knavery and prostitution during his command in Philadelphia, which the late seizure of his papers has unfolded, the history of his command at West Point, is a history of little as well as great villanies. He practised every art of peculation; and even stooped to connexion with the suttlers of the garrison to defraud the public.

To his conduct, that of the captors of André formed a striking contrast. He tempted them with the offer of his watch, his horse, and any sum of money they should name. They rejected his offers with indignation; and the gold that could seduce a man high in the esteem and confidence of his country, who had the remembrance of past exploits, the motives of present reputation and future glory, to prop his integrity, had no charms for three simple peasants, leaning only on their virtue and an honest sense of their duty. While Arnold is handed down, with execration, to future times, posterity will repeat with reverence the names of Van Wert, Paulding, and Williams.

I congratulate my friend on our happy escape from the mischiefs with which this treason was big. It is a new comment on the value of an honest man, and, if it were possible, would endear you to me more than ever. Adieu.

A. HAMILTON.

In a letter of the twenty-fifth of September, addressed to Miss Schuyler, he thus adverts to this affecting story:

“Arnold, hearing of the plot being detected, immediately fled to the enemy. I went in pursuit of him, but was much too late; and could hardly regret the disappointment, when

on my return, I saw an amiable woman, frantic with distress for the loss of a husband she tenderly loved, — a traitor to his country and to his fame, — a disgrace to his connexions ; it was the most affecting scene I ever was witness to. She, for a considerable time, entirely lost herself. The General went up to see her, and she upbraided him with being in a plot to murder her child. One moment she raved, another she melted into tears. Sometimes she pressed her infant to her bosom, and lamented its fate, occasioned by the imprudence of its father, in a manner that would have pierced insensibility itself. All the sweetness of beauty, all the loveliness of innocence, all the tenderness of a wife, and all the fondness of a mother, showed themselves in her appearance and conduct. We have every reason to believe, that she was entirely unacquainted with the plan, and that the first knowledge of it, was when Arnold went to tell her he must banish himself from his country and from her forever. She instantly fell into a convulsion, and he left her in that situation.

“This morning she is more composed. I paid her a visit, and endeavoured to soothe her by every method in my power ; though you may imagine she is not easily to be consoled. Added to her other distresses, she is very apprehensive the resentments of her country will fall upon her, (who is only unfortunate,) for the guilt of her husband.

“I have tried to persuade her that her fears are ill founded ; but she will not be convinced. She received us in bed, with every circumstance that would interest our sympathy, and her sufferings were so eloquent, that I wished myself her brother, to have a right to become her defender ; — as it is, I have entreated her to enable me to give her proofs of my friendship. Could I forgive Arnold for sacrificing his honour, reputation, and duty, I could not forgive him for acting a part that must have forfeited the esteem of so fine

a woman. At present, she almost forgets his crime in his misfortunes; and her horror at the guilt of the traitor, is lost in her love of the man. But a virtuous mind cannot long esteem a base one, and time will make her despise, if it cannot make her hate."

One circumstance in this melancholy scene dwelt deeply on the mind of Hamilton. It is that to which, in the beautiful tribute of an eloquent female,* to the memory of André, she most feelingly alludes,—the manner of his death. On the day of his execution, Hamilton thus writes.†

"Poor André suffers to-day;—every thing that is amiable in virtue, in fortitude, in delicate sentiment, and accomplished manners, pleads for him; but hard-hearted policy calls for a sacrifice. He must die——. I send you my account of Arnold's affair, and to justify myself to your sentiments, I must inform you, that I urged a compliance with André's request to be shot, and I do not think it would have had an ill effect, but some people are only sensible to motives of policy, and sometimes, from a narrow disposition, mistake it.

"When André's tale comes to be told, and present resentment is over,—the refusing him the privilege of choosing the manner of his death will be branded with too much obstinacy.

"It was proposed to me to suggest to him the idea of an exchange for Arnold; but I knew I should have forfeited his esteem by doing it, and therefore declined it. As a man of honour, he could not but reject it; and I would not for the world have proposed to him a thing which must have placed me in the unamiable light of supposing him capable of a meanness, or of not feeling myself the impropriety of the measure. I confess to you, I

* Miss Seward.

† Tappan, Oct. 2, 1780.

had the weakness to value the esteem of a dying man, because I revered his merit.”*

The eloquent and feeling narrative contained in these letters, which does so much honour to the sentiments of their author, is a just tribute to the character of the captive, and to the temper of the army.

André, educated amidst a circle of devoted relatives, and habitually indulging every ardent impulse of his generous nature, had torn himself from their reluctant arms to win honour in the field. Commended to the notice of Sir Henry Clinton, he rose fast in his esteem, and was often selected for those delicate duties which serve to mitigate the miseries of war.

In the performance of these, his deportment often formed a strong contrast with that of his less polished brethren; and such was the impression on the minds of those Americans who had been prisoners, that when the news of this event arrived, great as was the rejoicing at the detection of the plot and the capture of the spy, every bosom swelled with regret to learn that that spy was André.

Shocked as Hamilton was with the danger of this conspiracy, and his indignation heightened by the belief that it was intended to reach the person of Washington, his ge-

* The following note was addressed by André to General Washington, on the day previous to his execution.

Tappan, October 1, 1780.

“Buoyed above the terror of death, by the consciousness of a life devoted to honourable pursuits, and stained with no action that can give me remorse, I trust that the request I make to your excellency, at this serious period, and which is to soften my last moments, will not be rejected.

“Sympathy towards a soldier, will surely induce your excellency, and a military tribunal, to adapt the mode of my death to the feelings of a man of honour.

“Let me hope, sir, if aught in my character impresses you with esteem towards me, if aught in my misfortunes marks me as the victim of policy, and not of resentment, I shall experience the operation of these feelings in your breast, by being informed that I am not to die on a gibbet.”

nerous feelings, nevertheless, seemed wholly to take possession of him, and during all the period of André's confinement and trial, he exhausted every means to alleviate his sufferings, and to withdraw him from the bitterness of his reflections.

As soon as he was brought in, addressing to a much loved friend the unnecessary request, he said, "Major Jackson, I have learned that André was very kind to you when you were a prisoner, will you not visit him?" Thus awakening the sympathies of the army, he turned their resentment upon the traitor, to whose criminal arts the British officer had unhappily lent himself. The conduct of André's captors was the theme of honest pride, and every soldier in the camp participated in their triumph; but when the day of his execution came, he was followed only by the brigade on duty, and with the exception of those officers who surrounded the scaffold to soothe its victim, not an officer or soldier was to be seen as a spectator. All retired to their tents, exhibiting that delicacy and sensibility which became the soldiers of such a cause.

It is, indeed, impossible to trace the annals of the revolution without remarking the kind temper of the Americans towards their enemies, and the happy commingling of the heroic with the milder virtues, both in the army and in the people.

Habituated to all the comforts, indeed luxuries, which render the condition of the American commonalty an object of envy among those of less happy regions, and free as the wilderness which surrounded them, the aggravated privations that followed the march of war, — aggravated by the insolent bearing of an enemy, who threatened to visit on them the calamities which their own nation had experienced in a former age, and avowed the dispossession of the inhabitants, and the disherison of their progeny, as the reward promised to the subjugation of rebels, — amid ra-

pine and devastation, when even congress felt it necessary to advise the people to erect places of refuge in the forest, far from their dwellings, for their aged parents, their children, and their wives, yet whenever the instruments of these evils fell into their hands, they are seen nursing their wounds, fostering them amid their sufferings, and winning them by their kindnesses to a detestation of the cause in which they had embarked. In vain are sought instances of cruelty to the enemy. It would have been too great a violation of public sentiment, and would have doomed its perpetrators to infamy.

This virtue of a humane people, was followed by its reward. The enemy lost more by desertion than by the sword, especially among the mercenaries of the continent; and thus the seeds of those kind feelings were planted in the midst of war, which have drawn within the bosom of our country, and linked to her institutions, the oppressed of every other.



CHAPTER XII.

[1780.]

DURING the series of events which have been related in the preceding chapter, the mind of Hamilton, roused to the great political questions which engaged so strongly the public attention, though oppressed with the various labours of his situation, to which the letters of his friends frequently advert, turned with eager aptitude to an examination of the defects of the existing government, and the remedies which might be applied.

Mere military movements had become of secondary interest ; temporary expedients for the financial embarrassments were sought in vain ; and while the public press was engaged in the discussion of transient questions, he was looking with intense anxiety to the adoption of some great and effectual mean by which the distresses of the country might be reached at their sources.

From his first entrance into the public service, he felt the necessity of a more energetic system ; and it was objected to him then, as it has been since, that he looked with too fearful an apprehension upon a government merely federative and advisory.

An attempt, the most flagitious, was made on this ground, to produce a breach between him and the commander-in-chief, which was detected, exposed, and defied with a lofty tone of conscious purity.*

The same sense of the public dangers, influenced in common the minds of Washington and Hamilton ; and while

* The instrument was Doctor Gordon, author of the History of the American War.

the former in his addresses to congress was enforcing his apprehensions with all the solemnity which the dignity of his station authorized, the other, by letters to his friends, and by personal solicitation, sought, within a more limited sphere, to urge attention to this great object of his just and honest solicitude. In a letter to Isaac Sears, with whom his intimacy had been formed in the early struggles of New-York, he thus expresses himself:

“I was much obliged to you, my dear sir, for the letter which you did me the favour to write me since your return to Boston. I am sorry to find that the same spirit of indifference to public affairs prevails. It is necessary we should rouse, and begin to do our business in earnest, or we shall play a losing game. It is impossible the contest can be much longer supported on the present footing. We must have a government with more power. We must have a tax in kind. We must have a foreign loan. We must have a bank, on the true principles of a bank. We must have an administration distinct from congress, and in the hands of single men under their orders. We must, above all things, have an army for the war, and an establishment that will interest the officers in the service.

“Congress are deliberating on our military affairs; but I apprehend their resolutions will be tinctured with the old spirit. We seem to be proof against experience. They will, however, recommend an army for the war, at least as a primary object. All those who love their country, ought to exert their influence in the states where they reside to determine them to take up this object with energy. The states must sink under the burden of temporary enlistments, and the enemy will conquer us by degrees during the intervals of our weakness.

“Clinton is now said to be making a considerable detachment to the southward. My fears are high, my hopes low. We are told here, there is to be a congress of the neutral

powers at the Hague, for mediating of peace. God send it may be true. We want it ; but if the idea goes abroad, ten to one if we do not fancy the thing done, and fall into a profound sleep, till the cannon of the enemy awaken us next campaign. — This is our national character. — I am, with great regard, dear sir, your most obedient servant,

A. HAMILTON."

On these measures he seemed, at this time, perpetually to descant. Many of his letters have been lost, others cannot be obtained ; but in all that are known, his mind appeared intent on the accomplishment of what he early foresaw could alone save the country, — a re-organization of the government.

A letter written at this period, to his friend Duane, contains a comprehensive view of the subjects which engrossed his thoughts, and will give a clear insight into the character of his mind.

In this will be seen, how early and how deeply he looked into the wants of the country ; and with what enlarged ideas he projected a form of government, by which congress should have complete sovereignty in all that relates to war, peace, trade, and finance, and to the management of foreign affairs ; reserving merely to the states, that part of internal police which relates to the rights of property and life among individuals, and to raising money by internal taxes, — the distribution of the powers of the government into separate departments, — recruiting the army on a permanent establishment, — and an extensive and comprehensive system for drawing out the resources of the country, and rendering them most effectually applicable to its necessities.

The admirable perspicuity of his style, the extraordinary faculty which he showed in what he terms "a hastily written production," and when, as he says, "he is merely skimming the surface," of comprehending in a summary of his

thoughts every particular essential to the developement of them ; but what will be especially observed, the ripeness of his views, and that keen insight into the nature and operation of political institutions, which have given to his opinions such an authoritative influence, are here strongly manifested. He not only suggests the adoption of many of the leading measures which were soon after introduced, but points to a CONVENTION OF THE STATES, for the creation of a FEDERAL CONSTITUTION ; suggests the mode of enforcing its necessity on the minds of the people, by “sensible and popular writings;” thus hinting at the idea which gave birth to the “Federalist,” and unfolding some of those far-reaching views of national polity, which are there more fully developed.

COLONEL HAMILTON TO THE HON. JAMES DUANE.

Liberty Pole, 1780.

DEAR SIR,

Agreeable to your request, and my promise, I sit down to give you my ideas of the defects of our present system, and the changes necessary to save us from ruin. They may, perhaps, be the reveries of a projector, rather than the sober views of a politician. You will judge of them, and make what use you please of them.

The fundamental defect is a want of power in congress. It is hardly worth while to show in what this consists, as it seems to be universally acknowledged ; or to point out how it has happened, as the only question is how to remedy it. It may, however, be said, that it has originated from three causes, — an excess of the spirit of liberty, which has made the particular states show a jealousy of all power not in their own hands ; and this jealousy has led them to exercise a right of judging, in the last resort, of the measures recommended by congress, and of acting according to their own opinions of their propriety or necessity ; — a diffidence in congress of their own powers, by which they have been

timid and indecisive in their resolutions ; constantly making concessions to the states, till they have scarcely left themselves the shadow of power ; — a want of sufficient means at their disposal to answer the public exigencies, and of vigour to draw forth those means, which have occasioned them to depend on the states, individually, to fulfil their engagements with the army ; the consequence of which has been to ruin their influence and credit with the army, to establish its dependence on each state, separately, rather than *on them* ; that is, than on the whole collectively.

It may be pleaded that congress had never any definitive powers granted them, and of course could exercise none, — could do nothing more than recommend. The manner in which congress was appointed would warrant, and the public good required, that they should have considered themselves as vested with full power *to preserve the republic from harm*.

They have done many of the highest acts of sovereignty, which were always cheerfully submitted to ; the declaration of independence, the declaration of war, the levying an army, creating a navy, emitting money, making alliances with foreign powers, appointing a dictator, &c. &c. ; all these were implications of a complete sovereignty, were never disputed, and ought to have been a standard for the whole conduct of administration. Undefined powers are discretionary powers, limited only by the object for which they were given ; in the present case, the independence and freedom of America. The confederation made no difference ; for as it has not been generally adopted, it had no operation.

But, from what I recollect of it, congress have even descended from the authority which the spirit of that act gives them ; while the particular states have no farther attended to it, than as it suited their pretensions and convenience. It would take too much time to enter into particular in-

stances ; each of which, separately, might appear inconsiderable, but united are of serious import. I only mean to remark, not to censure.

But the confederation itself is defective, and requires to be altered ; it is neither fit for war, nor peace. The idea of an uncontrollable sovereignty in each state, over its internal police, will defeat the other powers given to congress, and make our union feeble and precarious. There are instances, without number, where acts necessary for the general good, and which rise out of the powers given to congress, must interfere with the internal police of the states ; and there are as many instances in which the particular states, by arrangements of internal police, can effectually, though indirectly, counteract the arrangements of congress. You have already had examples of this, for which I refer you to your own memory.

The confederation gives the states, individually, too much influence in the affairs of the army ; they should have nothing to do with it.

The entire formation and disposal of our military forces ought to belong to congress. It is an essential cement of the union ; and it ought to be the policy of congress to destroy all ideas of state attachments in the army, and make it look up wholly to them. For this purpose, all appointments, promotions, and provisions whatsoever, ought to be made by them. It may be apprehended, that this may be dangerous to liberty. But nothing appears more evident to me, than that we run much greater risk of having a weak and disunited federal government, than one which will be able to usurp upon the rights of the people.

Already some of the lines of the army would obey their states in opposition to congress, notwithstanding the pains we have taken to preserve the unity of the army. If any thing would hinder this, it would be the personal influence of the General — a melancholy and mortifying consideration.

The forms of our state constitutions must always give them great weight in our affairs, and will make it too difficult to blind them to the pursuit of a common interest, too easy to oppose whatever they do not like, and to form partial combinations, subversive of the general one. There is a wide difference between our situation and that of an empire under one simple form of government, distributed into counties, provinces, or districts, which have no legislatures, but merely magistratical bodies to execute the laws of a common sovereign. Here the danger is, that the sovereign will have too much power, and oppress the parts of which it is composed. In our case, that of an empire composed of confederative states, each with a government completely organized within itself, having all the means to draw its subjects to a close dependence on itself, the danger is directly the reverse. It is, that the common sovereign will not have power sufficient to unite the different members together, and direct the common forces to the interest and happiness of the whole.

The leagues among the old Grecian republics are a proof of this. They were continually at war with each other, and for want of union fell a prey to their neighbours. They frequently held general councils, but their resolutions were no farther observed, than as they suited the interests and inclinations of all the parties, and, at length, they sunk entirely into contempt.

The Swiss cantons are another proof of the doctrine. They have had wars with each other, which would have been fatal to them, had not the different powers in their neighbourhood been too jealous of one another, and too equally matched, to suffer either to take advantage of their quarrels. That they have remained so long united at all, is to be attributed to their weakness, to their poverty, and to the cause just mentioned. These ties will not exist in America. A little time hence, some of the states will be

powerful empires ; and we are so remote from other nations, that we shall have all the leisure and opportunity we can wish to cut each other's throats.

The Germanic corps might also be cited as an example in favour of the position.

The United Provinces may be thought to be one against it. But the family of the Stadtholders, whose authority is interwoven with the whole government, has been a strong link of union between them. Their physical necessities, and the habits founded upon them, have contributed to it. Each province is too inconsiderable by itself to undertake any thing. An analysis of their present constitution would show, that they have many ties which would not exist in ours ; and that they are by no means a proper model for us.

Our own experience should satisfy us. We have felt the difficulty of drawing out the resources of the country, and inducing the states to combine in equal exertions for the common cause. The ill success of our last attempt is striking. Some have done a great deal ; others little, or scarcely any thing. The disputes about boundaries, &c. testify how flattering a prospect we have of future tranquillity, if we do not frame in time a confederacy capable of deciding the differences, and compelling the obedience of the respective members.

The confederation, too, gives the power of the purse too entirely to the state legislatures. It should provide perpetual funds in the disposal of congress, by a land tax, poll tax, or the like. All imposts upon commerce ought to be laid by congress, and appropriated to their use ; for without certain revenues, a government can have no power ; that power which holds the purse strings absolutely, must rule. This seems to be a medium, which, without making congress altogether independent, will tend to give reality to its authority.

Another defect in our system is, want of method and

energy in the administration. This has partly resulted from the other defect; but in a great degree from prejudice and the want of a proper executive. Congress have kept the power too much in their own hands, and have meddled too much with details of every sort. Congress is properly a deliberative corps, and it forgets itself when it attempts to play the executive. It is impossible that a body, numerous as it is, constantly fluctuating, can ever act with sufficient decision, or with system. Two thirds of the members, one half the time, cannot know what has gone before them, or what connexion the subject in hand has to what has been transacted on former occasions. The members who have been more permanent, will only give information that promotes the side they espouse, in the present case, and will as often mislead as enlighten. The variety of business must distract, and the proneness of every assembly to debate, must at all times delay.

Lately, congress, convinced of these inconveniences, have gone into the measure of appointing boards. But this is, in my opinion, a bad plan. A single man, in each department of the administration, would be greatly preferable. It would give us a chance of more knowledge, more activity, more responsibility, and, of course, more zeal and attention. — Boards partake of a part of the inconveniences of larger assemblies; — their decisions are slower, their energy less, their responsibility more diffused. They will not have the same abilities and knowledge as an administration by single men. Men of the first pretensions will not so readily engage in them, because they will be less conspicuous, of less importance, have less opportunity of distinguishing themselves. The members of boards will take less pains to inform themselves and arrive at eminence, because they have fewer motives to do it. All these reasons conspire to give a preference to the plan of vesting the great executive departments of the state in the hands of individuals. As these

men will be, of course, at all times under the direction of congress, we shall blend the advantages of a monarchy and republic in one constitution.

A question has been made, whether single men could be found to undertake these offices. I think they could; because there would be then every thing to excite the ambition of candidates. But in order to this, congress, by their manner of appointing them, and the line of duty marked out, must show that they are in earnest in making these offices, offices of real trust and importance.

I fear a little vanity has stood in the way of these arrangements, as though they would lessen the importance of congress, and leave them nothing to do. But they would have precisely the same rights and powers as heretofore, happily disencumbered of the detail. They would have to inspect the conduct of their ministers, deliberate upon their plans, originate others for the public good, — only observing this rule, that they ought to consult their ministers, and get all the information and advice they could from them, before they entered into any new measures, or made changes in the old.

A third defect is, the fluctuating constitution of our army. This has been a pregnant source of evil; — all our military misfortunes, three-fourths of our civil embarrassments, are to be ascribed to it. The General has so fully enumerated the mischiefs, in a late letter to congress, that I could only repeat what he has said, and will, therefore, refer you to that letter.

The imperfect and unequal provision made for the army, is a fourth defect, which you will find delineated in the same letter. Without a speedy change, the army must dissolve; — it is now a mob rather than an army, — without clothing, without pay, without provision, without morals, without discipline. We begin to hate the country for its neglect of us; the country begins to hate us for our oppressions

of them. Congress have long been jealous of us ; we have now lost all confidence in them, and give the worst construction to all they do. Held together by the slenderest ties, we are ripening for a dissolution.

The present mode of supplying the army by state purchases is not one of the least considerable defects of our system. It is too precarious a dependence, because the states will never be sufficiently impressed with our necessities. Each will make its own ease a primary object, the supply of the army a secondary one. The variety of channels through which the business is transacted, will multiply the number of persons employed, and the opportunities of embezzling public money. From the popular spirit on which most of the governments turn, the state agents will be men of less character and ability ; nor will there be so rigid a responsibility among them as there might easily be among those in the employ of the continent ; of course not so much diligence, care, or economy. Very little of the money raised in the several states will go into the continental treasury, on pretence that it is all exhausted in providing the quotas of supplies, and the public will be without funds for the other demands of government. The expense will be ultimately much greater, and the advantage much smaller. We actually feel the insufficiency of this plan, and have reason to dread, under it, a ruinous extremity of want.

These are the principal defects in the present system that now occur to me. There are many inferior ones in the organization of particular departments, and many errors of administration, which might be pointed out ; but the task would be troublesome and tedious, and if we had once remedied those I have mentioned, the others would not be attended with much difficulty.

I shall now propose the remedies which appear to me applicable to our circumstances, and necessary to extricate our affairs from their present deplorable situation.

The first step must be to give congress powers competent to the public exigencies. This may happen in two ways : one by resuming and exercising the discretionary powers I suppose to have been originally vested in them for the safety of the states, and resting their conduct on the candour of their countrymen and the necessity of the conjuncture ; the other, by calling immediately a convention of all the states, with full authority to conclude finally upon a general confederation, stating to them beforehand explicitly the evils arising from a want of power in congress, and the impossibility of supporting the contest on its present footing, that the delegates may come possessed of proper sentiments, as well as proper authority, to give efficacy to the meeting. Their commission should include a right of vesting congress with the whole or a proportion of the unoccupied lands, to be employed for the purpose of raising a revenue, reserving the jurisdiction to the states by whom they are granted.

The first plan, I expect, will be thought too bold an expedient by the generality of congress ; and, indeed, their practice hitherto has so rivetted the opinion of their want of power, that the success of this experiment may very well be doubted.

I see no objection to the other mode that has any weight in competition with the reasons for it. The convention should assemble the first of November next ; the sooner the better ; our disorders are too violent to admit of a common or lingering remedy. The reasons for which I require them to be vested with plenipotentiary authority are, that the business may suffer no delay in the execution, and may in reality come to effect. A convention may agree upon a confederation ; the states, individually, hardly ever will. We must have one, at all events, and a vigorous one, if we mean to succeed in the contest and be happy hereafter. As I said before, to engage the states to com-

ply with this mode, congress ought to confess to them, plainly and unanimously, the impracticability, of supporting our affairs on the present footing, and without a solid coercive union. I ask that the convention should have a power of vesting the whole or a part of the unoccupied lands in congress, because it is necessary that body should have some property, as a fund for the arrangements of finance ; and I know of no other kind that can be given them.

The confederation, in my opinion, should give congress a complete sovereignty ; except as to that part of internal police which relates to the rights of property and life among individuals, and to raising money by internal taxes. It is necessary that every thing belonging to this should be regulated by the state legislatures. Congress should have complete sovereignty in all that relates to war, peace, trade, finance ; and to the management of foreign affairs ; the right of declaring war, of raising armies, officering, paying them, directing their motions in every respect ; of equipping fleets, and doing the same with them ; of building fortifications, arsenals, magazines, &c. &c. ; of making peace on such conditions as they think proper ; of regulating trade, determining with what countries it shall be carried on ; granting indulgences ; laying prohibitions on all the articles of export or import ; imposing duties, granting bounties and premiums for raising, exporting, or importing ; and applying to their own use the product of these duties, only giving credit to the states on whom they are raised in the general account of revenues and expense ; instituting admiralty courts, &c. ; of coining money, establishing banks on such terms, and with such privileges, as they think proper ; appropriating funds, and doing whatever else relates to the operations of finance ; transacting every thing with foreign nations ; making alliances, offensive and defensive, treaties of commerce, &c. &c.

The confederation should provide certain perpetual revenues, productive and easy of collection ; a land tax, poll tax, or the like, which, together with the duties on trade, and the unlocated lands, would give congress a substantial existence, and a stable foundation for their schemes of finance. What more supplies were necessary, should be occasionally demanded of the states, in the present mode of quotas.

The second step I would recommend is, that congress should instantly appoint the following great officers of state : A Secretary for Foreign Affairs ; a President of War ; a President of Marine ; a Financier ; a President of Trade ; instead of this last, a Board of Trade may be preferable, as the regulations of trade are slow and guarded, and require prudence and experience, (more than other qualities,) for which boards are very well adapted.

Congress should choose for these offices, men of the first abilities, property, and character, in the continent ; and such as have had the best opportunities of being acquainted with the several branches. General Schuyler, whom you mentioned, would make an excellent President of War ; General McDougal a very good President of Marine ; Mr. Robert Morris would have many things in his favour for the department of Finance. He could, by his own personal influence, give great weight to the measures he should adopt. I dare say, men equally capable may be found for the other departments.

I know not if it would not be a good plan to let the Financier be President of the Board of Trade ; but he should only have a casting voice in determining questions there. There is a connexion between trade and finance, which ought to make the director of one acquainted with the other ; but the financier should not direct the affairs of trade, because, for the sake of acquiring reputation by increasing the revenues, he might adopt measures that would

depress trade. In what relates to finance he should be alone.

These officers should have nearly the same powers and functions as those in France analogous to them, and each should be chief in his department, with subordinate boards, composed of assistants, clerks, &c., to execute his orders.

In my opinion, a plan of this kind would be of inconceivable utility to our affairs; its benefits would be very speedily felt. It would give new life and energy to the operations of government. Business would be conducted with despatch, method, and system. A million of abuses now existing would be corrected, and judicious plans would be formed and executed for the public good.

Another step of immediate necessity is, to recruit the army for the war, or at least for three years. This must be done by a mode similar to that which is practised in Sweden. There the inhabitants are thrown into classes of sixteen, and when the sovereign wants men, each of these classes must furnish one. They raise a fixed sum of money, and if one of the class is willing to become a soldier, he receives the money and offers himself a volunteer; if none is found to do this, a draft is made, and he on whom the lot falls, receives the money, and is obliged to serve. The minds of the people are prepared for a thing of this kind; the heavy bounties they have been obliged to pay for men to serve a few months, must have disgusted them with this mode, and made them desirous of another, that will, once for all, answer the public purposes, and obviate a repetition of the demand. It ought by all means to be attempted; and congress should frame a general plan, and press the execution upon the states. When the confederation comes to be framed, it ought to provide for this, by a fundamental law; and hereafter there would be no doubt of the success. But we cannot now wait for this: we want to replace the men whose times of service will ex-

pire the first of January; for then, without this, we shall have no army remaining, and the enemy may do what they please. The General, in his letter already quoted, has assigned the most substantial reasons for paying immediate attention to this point.

Congress should endeavour, both upon their credit in Europe, and by every possible exertion in this country, to provide clothing for their officers, and should abolish the whole system of state supplies. The making good the depreciation of the currency, and all other compensations to the army, should be immediately taken up by congress, and not left to the states; if they would have the accounts of depreciation liquidated, and governmental certificates given for what is due, in specie, or an equivalent to specie, it would give satisfaction, appointing periodical settlements for future depreciation.

The placing the officers upon half-pay, during life, would be a great stroke of policy, and would give congress a stronger tie upon them than any thing else they can do. No man, that reflects a moment, but will prefer a permanent provision of this kind, to any temporary compensation; nor is it opposed to economy; the difference between this, and what has been already done, will be insignificant. The benefit of it to the widows, should be confined to those whose husbands die during the war. As to the survivors, not more than one-half, on the usual calculation of men's lives, will exceed the seven years for which the half-pay is already established. Besides this, whatever may be the visionary speculations of some men at this time, we shall find it indispensable, after the war, to keep on foot a considerable body of troops; and all the officers retained for this purpose, must be deducted out of the half-pay list. If any one will take the pains to calculate the expense on these principles, I am persuaded he will find the addition

of expense from the establishment proposed, by no means a national object.

The advantages of securing the attachment of the army to congress, and binding them to the service, by substantial ties, are immense.

We should, then, have discipline ; an army in reality, as well as in name. Congress would then have a solid basis of authority and consequence ; for with me it is an axiom, that in our constitution an army is essential to the American union.

The providing of supplies, is the pivot of every thing else ; (though a well constituted army would not, in a small degree, conduce to this, by giving consistency and weight to government,) there are four ways, all which must be united, — a foreign loan, — heavy pecuniary taxes, — a tax in kind, — a bank founded on public and private credit.

As to a foreign loan, I dare say, congress are doing every thing in their power to obtain it. The most effectual way will be, to tell France that without it, we must make terms with Great Britain. This must be done with plainness and firmness, but with respect and without petulance ; not as a menace, but as a candid declaration of our circumstances. We need not fear to be deserted by France ; her interest and honour are too deeply involved in our fate ; and she can make no possible compromise. She can assist us, if she is convinced it is absolutely necessary, either by lending us, herself, or by becoming our surety, or by influencing Spain. It has been to me astonishing, how any man could have doubted, at any period of our affairs, of the necessity of a foreign loan. It was self-evident that we had not a fund of wealth in this country, capable of affording revenues equal to the expenses. We must, then, create artificial revenues, or borrow ; the first was done, but it ought to have been foreseen, that the expedient could not last, and we should have provided in time for its failure.

Here was an error of congress. I have good reason to believe, that measures were not taken in earnest early enough to procure a loan abroad : I give you my honour, that from our first outset, I thought as I do now ; and wished for a foreign loan, not only because I foresaw it would be essential, but because I considered it a tie upon the nation from which it was derived, and as a mean to prop our cause in Europe.

Concerning the necessity of heavy pecuniary taxes, I need say nothing, as it is a point in which every body is agreed; nor is there any danger, that the product of any taxes raised in this way, will overburthen the people, or exceed the wants of the public. Indeed, if all the paper in circulation were drawn annually into the treasury, it would neither do one nor the other.

As to a tax in kind, the necessity of it results from this principle, — that the money in circulation is not a sufficient representative of the productions of the country, and consequently no revenues raised from it, as a medium, can be a competent representative of that part of the products of the country, which it is bound to contribute to the support of the public. The public, therefore, to obtain its due, or satisfy its just demands and its wants, must call for a part of these products themselves. This is done in all those countries which are not commercial ; in Russia, Prussia, Denmark, Sweden, &c., and is peculiarly necessary in our case.

Congress, in calling for specific supplies, seem to have had this in view ; but their intention has not been answered. The states, in general, have undertaken to furnish the supplies by purchase, — a mode, as I have observed, attended with every inconvenience, and subverting the principle on which the supplies were demanded, — the insufficiency of our circulating medium, as a representative for the labour and commodities of the country. It is, there-

fore, necessary, that congress should be more explicit; should form the outlines of a plan for a tax in kind, and recommend it to the states, as a measure of absolute necessity.

The general idea I have of a plan is, that a respectable man should be appointed by the state in each county to collect the taxes, and form magazines; that congress should have in each state an officer to superintend the whole, and that the state collectors should be subordinate and responsible to them. This continental superintendent might be subject to the general direction of the quarter-master-general, or not, as might be deemed best; but if not subject to him, he should be obliged to make monthly returns to the President at War, who should instruct him what proportion to deliver to the quarter-master-general. It may be necessary, that the superintendents should sometimes have power to dispose of the articles in their possession, on public account; for it would happen, that the contributions, in places remote from the army, could not be transported to the theatre of operations without too great expense; in which case, it would be eligible to dispose of them, and purchase with the money so raised in the counties near the immediate scene of war.

I know the objections which may be raised to this plan,—its tendency to discourage industry and the like; but necessity calls for it; we cannot proceed without, and less evils must give place to greater. It is, besides, practised with success in other countries, and why not in this? It may be said, the examples cited are from nations under despotic governments, and that the same would not be practicable with us; but I contend, where the public good is evidently the object, more may be effected in governments like ours, than in any other. It has been a constant remark, that free countries have ever paid the heaviest taxes; the obedience of a free people to general laws, how-

ever hard they bear, is ever more perfect than that of slaves to the arbitrary will of a prince. To this, it may be added, that Sweden was always a free government, and is so now, in a great degree, notwithstanding the late revolution.

How far it may be practicable to erect a bank on the faint credit of the public, and of individuals, can only be certainly determined by the experiment ; but it is of so much importance that the experiment ought to be fully tried. When I saw the subscriptions going on to the bank established for supplying the army, I was in hopes it was only the embryo of a more permanent and extensive establishment. But I have reason to believe I shall be disappointed. It does not seem to be at all conducted on the true principles of a bank. The directors of it are purchasing with their stock, instead of bank notes as I expected ; in consequence of which, it must turn out to be a mere subscription of a particular sum of money, for a particular purpose.

Paper credit never was long supported in any country, on a national scale, where it was not founded on the joint basis of public and private credit. An attempt to establish it on public credit alone, in France, under the auspices of Mr. Law, nearly ruined the kingdom. We have seen the effects of it in America ; and every successive experiment proves the futility of the attempt. Our new money is depreciating almost as fast as the old, though it has, in some states, as real funds as paper money ever had. The reason is, that the moneyed men have not an immediate interest to uphold its credit. They may even, in many ways, find it their interest to undermine it. The only certain manner to obtain a permanent paper credit, is to engage the moneyed interest immediately in it, by making them contribute the whole or part of the stock, and giving them the whole or part of the profits.

The invention of banks, on the modern principle, origina-

ted in Venice. There, the public, and a company of moneyed men, are mutually concerned. The Bank of England unites public authority and faith, with private credit; and hence we see what a vast fabric of paper credit is raised on a visionary basis. Had it not been for this, England would never have found sufficient funds to carry on her wars; but with the help of this, she has done, and is doing, wonders. The Bank of Amsterdam is on a similar foundation.

And why cannot we have an American bank? Are our moneyed men less enlightened to their own interest, or less enterprising in the pursuit? I believe the fault is in government, which does not exert itself to engage them in such a scheme. It is true, the individuals in America are not very rich; but this would not prevent their instituting a bank; it would only prevent its being done with such ample funds as in other countries. Have they not sufficient confidence in the government, and in the issue of the cause? Let the government endeavour to inspire that confidence, by adopting the measures I have recommended, or others equivalent to them. Let it exert itself to procure a solid confederation,—to establish a good plan of executive administration,—to form a permanent military force,—to obtain, at all events, a foreign loan. If these things were in a train of vigorous execution, it would give a new spring to our affairs; government would recover its respectability, and individuals would renounce their diffidence.

The object I should propose to myself, in the first instance, from a bank, would be an auxiliary mode of supplies; for which purpose contracts should be made between government and the bank, on terms liberal and advantageous to the latter. Every thing should be done, in the first instance, to encourage the bank; after it gets well established, it will take care of itself, and government may make the best terms it can for itself.

The first step to establishing the bank, will be to engage

a number of moneyed men of influence to relish the project, and make it a business. The subscribers to that lately established, are the fittest persons that can be found ; and their plan may be interwoven.

The outlines of my plan would be to open subscriptions, in all the states, for the stock, which we will suppose to be one million of pounds. Real property, of every kind, as well as specie, should be deemed good stock ; but at least a fourth part of the subscription should be in specie or plate. There should be one great company, in three divisions ; in Virginia, Philadelphia, and at Boston ; or two, at Philadelphia and Boston. The bank should have a right to issue bank notes, bearing two per cent. interest for the whole of their stock ; but not to exceed it. These notes may be payable every three months, or oftener ; and the faith of government must be pledged for the support of the bank. It must, therefore, have a right, from time to time, to inspect its operations ; and must appoint inspectors for the purpose.

The advantages of the bank may consist in this : in the profits of the contracts made with government, which should bear interest, to be annually paid in specie ; in the loan of money at interest, say six per cent. ; in purchasing lives by annuities, as practised in England, &c. The benefit resulting to the company is evident, from the consideration, that they may employ in circulation a great deal more money than they have specie in stock, on the credit of the real property which they will have in other use. This money will be employed, either in fulfilling their contracts with the public, by which, also, they will gain a profit, or in loans, at an advantageous interest, or in annuities.

The bank may be allowed to purchase plate and bullion, and coin money, allowing government a part of the profit.

I make the bank notes bear interest, to obtain a readier currency, and to induce the holders to prefer them to spe-

cie, to prevent too great a run upon the bank, at any time, beyond its ability to pay.

If government can obtain a foreign loan, it should lend to the bank, on easy terms, to extend its influence, and facilitate a compliance with its engagements. If government could engage the states to raise a sum of money in specie, to be deposited in bank, in the same manner, it would be of the greatest consequence. If government could prevail on the enthusiasm of the people, to make a contribution in plate, for the same purpose, it would be a master stroke. Things of this kind sometimes succeed in popular contests; and if undertaken with address, I should not despair of its success; but I should not be sanguine.

The bank may be instituted for a term of years, by way of trial; and the particular privilege of coining money be for a term still shorter.

A temporary transfer of it to a particular company can have no inconvenience, as the government are in no condition to improve this resource; nor could it, in our circumstances, be an object to it, though with the industry of a knot of individuals, it might be a valuable one to them.

A bank of this kind, even in its commencement, would answer the most valuable purposes to government, and to the proprietors; in its progress, the advantages will exceed calculation. It will promote commerce, by furnishing a more extensive medium, which we greatly want, in our circumstances. I mean a more extensive, valuable medium. We have an enormous nominal one at this time; but it is only a name.

In the present unsettled state of things, in this country, we can hardly draw inferences, from what has happened in others; otherwise I should be certain of the success of this scheme; but I think it has enough in its favour to be worthy of trial.

I have only skimmed the surface of the different subjects

I have introduced. Should the plans recommended come into contemplation in earnest, and you desire my farther thoughts, I will endeavour to give them more form and particularity.

I am persuaded a solid confederation, a permanent army, a reasonable prospect of subsisting it, would give us treble consideration in Europe, and produce a peace this winter.

If a convention is called, the minds of all the states and the people ought to be prepared to receive its determinations by sensible and popular writings, which should conform to the views of congress. There are epochs in human affairs, when *novelty* even is useful. If a general opinion prevails that the old way is bad, whether true or false, and this obstructs or relaxes the operations of the public service, a change is necessary if it be but for the sake of change. This is exactly the case now. 'Tis an universal sentiment that our present system is a bad one, and that things do not go right on this account. The measure of a convention would revive the hopes of the people, and give a new direction to their passions, which may be improved in carrying points of substantial utility. The eastern states have already pointed out this mode to congress: they ought to take the hint, and anticipate the others.

And in future, my dear sir, two things let me recommend, as fundamental rules for the conduct of congress: to attach the army to them by every motive,—to maintain an authority, (not domineering,) in all their measures with the states. The manner in which a thing is done, has more influence than is commonly imagined. Men are governed by opinion: this opinion is as much influenced by appearances as by realities. If a government appears to be confident of its own powers, it is the surest way to inspire the same confidence in others. If it is diffident, it may be certain there will be a still greater diffidence in others, and

that its authority will not only be distrusted, controverted, but contemned.

I wish, too, congress would always consider, that a kindness consists as much in the manner as in the thing. The best things, done hesitatingly, and with an ill grace, lose their effect, and produce disgust rather than satisfaction or gratitude. In what congress have at any time done for the army, they have commonly been too late. They have seemed to yield to importunity, rather than to sentiments of justice, or to a regard to the accommodation of their troops. An attention to this idea is of more importance than it may be thought. I, who have seen all the workings and progress of the present discontents, am convinced that a want of this has not been among the most inconsiderable causes.

You will perceive, my dear sir, this letter is hastily written, and with a confidential freedom, not as to a member of congress, whose feelings may be sore at the prevailing clamour; but as to a friend, who is in a situation to remedy public disorders, — who wishes for nothing so much as truth, and who is desirous for information, even from those less capable of judging than himself. I have not even time to correct and copy,* and only enough to add, that I am, very truly and affectionately, dear sir,

Your most obedient servant,

A. HAMILTON.

Such were the plans which his extensive genius originated, to raise this country above all the chances of the revolution, — to give to it a national government, — to call out all its resources, and to relieve it from that entire dependence on France, which, though not a native, he felt with all a native's pride.

* For this document, the author is indebted to a connexion of Mr. Duane.

This feeling is strongly indicated in the following letter to congress from head quarters.

* * * * * "We may soon be reduced to the humiliating condition of seeing the cause of America, in America, upheld by foreign arms. The generosity of our allies has a claim to all our confidence and all our gratitude ; but it is neither for the honour of America, nor for the interest of the common cause, to leave the work entirely to them."

The measures thus suggested by Hamilton, were before the times. His remark, that the people were proof against experience, was too true ; and the moment when a government, possessing all the energies necessary for its own preservation, and all the checks essential to freedom, might have been formed, passed away.

A short time after this subject was brought before congress, the news of the defeat of Gates, at Camden, was received, and a deeper gloom was spread over the public mind, now sadly disappointed in the fond hopes which had been indulged, of the benefits to be derived from the co-operation of France. Hamilton thus speaks of this event, in a letter of the sixth of September, written to a near friend in perfect confidence.

"Most people here are groaning under a very disagreeable piece of intelligence, just come from the southward, that Gates has had a total defeat near Camden, in South Carolina. Cornwallis and he met in the night of the fifteenth, by accident, marching to the same point. The advanced guards skirmished, and the two armies halted and formed till morning. In the morning a battle ensued, in which the militia, and Gates with them, immediately ran away, and left the continental troops to contend with the enemy's whole force.

"They did it obstinately, and probably are most of them cut off. Gates, however, who writes to congress, seems to know very little what has become of his army. He

showed that age, and the long labours and fatigues of a military life, had not in the least impaired his activity ; for in three days and a half he reached Hillsborough, one hundred and eighty miles from the scene of action, leaving all his troops to take care of themselves, and get out of the scrape as well as they could. He has confirmed, in this instance, the opinion I always had of him. This event will have very serious consequences to the southward. People's imaginations have already given up North Carolina and Virginia ; but I do not believe either of them will fall. I am certain Virginia cannot. This misfortune affects me less than others, because it is not in my temper to repine at evils that are past, but to endeavour to draw good out of them, and because I think our safety depends on a total change of system, and this change of system will only be produced by misfortune."

On being informed of this disaster, congress wisely confided to Washington the selection of a successor to the unfortunate general. The importance of this trust, was strongly felt at head quarters, and though Washington preferred Greene, yet when called upon to act under the resolution of that body, he duly appreciated the full extent of their confidence, and with that slow, but sure discretion, which rarely erred, he weighed every circumstance connected with the station. Respect for local feelings, might have led him to prefer a general officer from the south, had any such been deemed equal to this high command ; a regard, also, for the prejudices of certain members of congress against Greene, and the injurious conduct which had been exhibited to him as quarter-master-general, gave rise to a fear that he might not receive that support which the scene of his operations eminently demanded. These well-grounded reasons for hesitation, induced the ardent friendship of Hamilton to apprehend, lest, in the interval of decision, some circumstance might occur to bias the judgement of the commander-in-

chief, and lose to the country the services of a man, in whose superior qualifications he had unmeasured confidence. He immediately exerted all his influence to induce an instant decision. The other members of the family, in whom the character of Greene had inspired similar sentiments, concurred in urging his selection; and Washington, thus sustained by his disinterested and most confidential advisers, chose a Deliverer for the south, — a choice which, under the peculiar circumstances which existed, is perhaps among the most exalted acts of his life.

“This choice,” says La Fayette, “when made public, was generally approved by the army, but not to the high degree in which it was afterwards applauded. Congress and the country supposed the share of friendship in the choice, greater than it had been. Many suspended, or flatly denied their approbation, until it was universally acknowledged, that in General Greene were united all the abilities and virtues which fitted him for this important command.”

A letter from Colonel Harrison, written at this time marks the state of opinion in congress on this subject.

HARRISON TO HAMILTON.

October 27, 1780.

MY DEAR HAMILTON,

We are only leaving Philadelphia. The most flattering attentions have been paid to Meade and myself, and such as would not permit us to progress before, unless we had shown ourselves entirely disregardless of the great world; besides, motives of a public nature concurred to make us stay thus long. From all I have seen and heard, there is a good disposition in congress to do all they can for the army and the public interest, and there are many very sensible men among them. In general, they are most warmly attached to the General, and his recommendations will have their weight, while the same spirit prevails. It is said, there

has been infinitely more harmony among them for some time past, than has appeared since the first years of their appointment. I am not, however, without some apprehension, that if they proceed in the case of Lee, &c. the MONSTER (PARTY,) may show itself again, and that we may have a second edition of the measures adopted in the instance of Deane. Our friends Sullivan and Carroll have been of great service; and gentlemen who are, or pretend to be, in the secrets of the cabinet, say they have contributed immeasurably, by their independent conduct, to destroy the EASTERN ALLIANCE. Bland is very clever, and without question wishes to push on in the true and right road. Grayson says this is the best congress we have had since the first. Our dear Laurens respects many of the members; and General Greene's appointment, I believe, is entirely consonant to the wishes of congress in general, though we have heard there were members much disposed, if facts had not been so obstinate, to excuse General Gates. The former is here, and I suppose will set out in a day or two; Meade and I will serve him all we can. We have done what we could already. Apropos, you delivered him my letter. Our finances are entirely deranged, and there is little or no money in the treasury. I believe they are a subject of much consideration and puzzlement; the supplies of the army are also matters of present attention, but I don't know what will be done. I hope we shall, by Christmas, have some clothing from the West Indies, if the moth have not destroyed it; — a quantity it is said has been lying there. It is much to be wished that General Greene were at the south. The delegates from that quarter think the situation of Cornwallis delicate, and that by management, and a proper application and use of the force there, the late check given Ferguson might be improved into the Earl's total defeat. This, I fear, is too much even to hope. The sending the Baron is considered, as far as I have heard, perfectly right, and Lee's corps give great

satisfaction. I am just about to mount my horse, and therefore shall say but little more. Laurens will write unto you in a few days, I suppose, and communicate any new occurrences. My love to the lads of the family, — the same to you. May you be long happy. My most respectful compliments to the General.

Most truly and affectionately,

ROB. H. HARRISON.

P. S. The Board have been absolutely too poor to procure parchment for the many promotions that have been required.

Greene, on the annunciation to him of his appointment, by Hamilton, proceeded to head quarters,* and, after an interview with Washington, visited Philadelphia, to concert the measures necessary for the supplies of his army; and having made every exertion to secure the co-operation of individuals possessing influence, near the scene of his future operations, arrived at Charlotte, the head quarters of the army, on the second of December, where he received a letter from Hamilton, directing him to call a court martial on Gates, without delay, and give him every facility for an immediate defence, — who wrote to Congress,† complaining of his not being notified, in due time, of his being superseded. The defeat of King's Mountain induced Cornwallis to order a detachment, under Leslie, of three thousand men, which Clinton had sent on to co-operate in Virginia, to join him by the way of Charleston; and as it was advancing in the direction of Camden, Greene moved with his main body to the vicinity of the troops under General Morgan.

The situation of the country, and of the army, when Greene took the command, is thus described, in a letter

* October 22d, 1780.

† January 3d, 1781.

from him to Colonel Hamilton, written from the camp, at the falls of the Pedee.

GENERAL GREENE TO COLONEL HAMILTON.

January 10th, 1781.

MY DEAR COLONEL,

General Du Portail being on his way to the northward, gives me an opportunity to write you, which I should have done before, had not my letters to his excellency contained as full information of the state of things as I was able to give, from the little time I had been in the department.

When I was appointed to this command, I expected to meet with many new and singular difficulties ; but they infinitely exceed what I apprehended. This is really carrying on a war in an enemy's country ; for you cannot establish the most inconsiderable magazine, or convey the smallest quantity of stores from one post to another, without being obliged to detach guards for their security. The division among the people is much greater than I imagined, and the whigs and tories persecute each other, with little less than savage fury. There is nothing but murders, and devastations, in every quarter.

The loss of our army at Charleston, and the defeat of General Gates, has been the cause of keeping such shoals of militia on foot, and their service has been accompanied with such destruction and loss, as has almost laid waste the whole country. Nothing has been more destructive to the true interest of this country, than the mode adopted for its defence. Two misfortunes happening, one after the other, may have rendered it unavoidable the last season ; but should it be continued, the inhabitants are inevitably ruined, and the resources of the country rendered incapable of affording support to an army competent to its defence. Government here is infinitely more popular than to the northward, and there is no such thing as national character or

national sentiment. The inhabitants are from all quarters of the globe, and as various in their opinions, projects, and schemes, as their manners and habits are from their early education. Those in office, from a vanity to be thought powerful, join in the measure of imposing upon the public respecting the strength and resources of these southern states; and while congress, and the minister of France, are kept under this fatal delusion, I fear little support will be given to this department. The inhabitants are numerous; but they would be rather formidable abroad than at home. They are scattered over such a vast extent of country, that it is difficult to collect, and still more difficult to subsist them. There is a great spirit of enterprise among the back people, and those that come out as volunteers are not a little formidable to the enemy. There are, also, some particular corps, under Sumpter, Marion, and Clarke, that are bold and daring; the rest of the militia are better calculated to destroy provisions than oppose the enemy.

At Philadelphia, and all my journey through the country, I endeavoured to impress upon those in power, the necessity of sending clothing, and supplies of every kind, immediately to this army. But poverty was urged as a plea, in bar to every application. They all promised fair, but I fear will do but little: ability is wanting with some, and inclination with others.

Public credit is so totally lost, that private people will not give their aid, though they see themselves involved in one common ruin. It is my opinion, that General Washington's influence will do more than all the assemblies upon the continent. I always thought him exceeding popular; but in many places he is little less than adored, and universally admired. His influence in this country might possibly effect something great. However, I found myself exceedingly well received, but more from being the friend of the General, than from my own merit.

This country wants for its defence a small, but well appointed army, organized so as to move with great celerity. It should consist of about five thousand infantry, and from eight hundred to a thousand horse. The enemy cannot maintain a large force in this quarter, neither can we. The resources of the country are too small to subsist a large body of troops at any one point; and to draw supplies from a distance through such long tracts of barren land, will be next to impossible, unless the business can be aided by a water transportation, and in either case, it will be accompanied with an amazing expense. Could we get a superiority of horse, we could soon render it difficult for Lord Cornwallis to hold his position so far in the country. Nor should I be under any apprehension with a much inferior force to his, of taking post near him, if I had but such a body of horse. But the enemy's horse is so much superior to ours, that we cannot move a detachment towards them, without hazarding its ruin.

When I came to the army, I found it in a most wretched condition. The officers had lost all confidence in the General, and the troops all their discipline. The troops had not only lost their discipline, but they were so addicted to plundering, that they were a terror to the country. The General and I met at least upon very civil terms; and he expressed the greatest happiness at my being appointed to succeed him.

General Smallwood and he were not upon good terms; the former suspected the latter of having an intention to supplant him, but many think without reason. Others, again, are of opinion, his suspicions were well founded, and that Smallwood was not a little mortified at my being appointed to this department, and got outrageous when he heard Baron Steuben was coming also. How the matter was, I know not; certain it is, he is gone home, having refused to act under Baron Steuben, and declares he will not serve at

all, unless congress will give him a commission, dated at least two years before his appointment. This, I think, can never happen, notwithstanding his private merit, and the claim of the state. The battle of Camden here is represented widely different from what it is to the northward.

Colonel Williams thinks that none of the general officers were entitled to any extraordinary merit. The action was short, and succeeded by a flight, wherein every body took care of himself, as well officers as soldiers. Not an officer, except Major Anderson, and one or two captains, that brought off the field of battle a single soldier. The Colonel also says, that General Gates would have shared little more disgrace, than is the common lot of the unfortunate, notwithstanding he was early off, if he had only halted at the Waxhaws or Charlotte; — the first about sixty, and the last about eighty miles from the field of battle. What little incidents either give or destroy reputation? How many long hours a man may labour with an honest zeal in his country's service, and be disgraced for the most trifling error either in conduct or opinion? Hume very justly observes, no man will have reputation, unless he is useful to society, be his merit or abilities what they may. Therefore, it is necessary for a man to be fortunate, as well as wise and just. The greater part of the loss of the Maryland line, in the action of Camden, happened after they began to retreat: indeed, this was the case with all the troops. What gave Smallwood such great reputation, was his halt at Salisbury, which was nothing but accident. You know there are great parties prevailing in the Maryland line, and perhaps his merit is not a little diminished on that account. I think him a brave and good officer, but too slow to effect any thing great in a department like this, where embarrassments are without number; and where nothing can be effected without the greatest promptitude and decision. This army is in such a wretched condition, that I hardly know

what to do with it. The officers have got such a habit of negligence, and the soldiers so loose and disorderly, that it is next to impossible to give it a military complexion. Without clothing, I am sure I shall never do it. I call no councils of war, and I communicate my intentions to very few. The army was posted at Charlotte when I came up with it, and in a council, it had been determined to winter there; but the difficulty of procuring subsistence, and other reasons, induced me not only to take a new position, but to make an entire new disposition. All this I effected by a single order, having first made the necessary inquiry respecting the new positions, by sending a man to examine the grounds and other requisites. If I cannot inspire the army with confidence, and respect by an independent conduct, I foresee it will be impossible to instil discipline and order among the troops. General Leslie has arrived, and joined Lord Cornwallis, whose force now is more than three times larger than ours; and we are subsisting ourselves by our own industry, and I am not without hopes of forming something like a magazine. I am labouring also to get clothing from every quarter; Baron Steuben is in Virginia, and is indefatigable in equipping and forwarding the troops from that state. I left General Gates in Maryland for the same purpose; but I have got nothing from there yet, nor do I expect much for months to come. The North Carolina state have such a high opinion of the militia, that I don't expect they will ever attempt to raise a single continental soldier; notwithstanding the most sensible among them will acknowledge the folly of employing militia.

But I must have tired your patience, and therefore will make a full stop concerning matters in this department, and inquire how you go on to the northward. Have you got married? If you have, please to present my compliments to Mrs. Hamilton; if not, to Miss Schuyler, and to the General and family in either case.

I beg my compliments to General Washington's family, to General Knox and his family, and all other of my acquaintances.

I shall be exceedingly obliged to you if you will communicate to me, with great freedom, every thing worthy of note that is said or respects this department.

While the important question of a successor to Gates was under consideration, a project was in agitation, partly the result of discontent with the feeble measures of congress, but principally induced by the apprehensions which the defeat at Camden had produced, for the appointment of "a Supreme Dictator and Vice Dictators in each state, with all the powers conferred by the Roman people."

The difficulty of supplying the armies, and the necessity of some general concert, had led to the determination of holding a convention at Hartford, to be composed of the five New-England states and the state of New-York ; by which latter state, Judge Hobart, Egbert Benson, then attorney general, and General Schuyler, were selected as commissioners. It was, for a time, contemplated by the legislature, to give them instructions "to propose that a dictator should be appointed, for which a majority in the more popular branch were believed to be favourable." "This mad project," as Hamilton designated it, was communicated to him by General Schuyler, in a letter of the sixteenth of September, 1780. As soon as Hamilton heard of it, it met with his instant disapprobation, and he discouraged it in the most earnest manner. General Schuyler, upon whom this duty would have been imposed, relinquished his purpose of attending at Hartford, where the consultations were confined to the consideration of measures for supplying the army, which is stated to have resulted in the project of a national impost. Thus do we observe Hamilton, while urging the establishment of an efficient government, con-

fining his views to the distribution of its powers in various well-defined departments, securing to each its necessary action and reciprocal dependence, the whole emanating from, and resting upon, a free and deliberate popular will.

This project of a dictator was regarded by him as "a temporary effusion," but as a strong example of the readiness with which "the human passions flow from one extreme to the other." It had a decisive influence on his determination to endeavour to give such stability to government as would protect the people from the danger which sudden emergencies might produce, of conferring extraordinary powers on its head, and of rendering necessary and palatable, expedients which would lead from temporary to permanent usurpations.*

About the time of General Greene's departure for the south, a plan of an attack upon the British troops, then on Staten Island, was in contemplation, which had originated with Hamilton, and in which it was arranged that La Fayette was to command. In a letter from him to Colonel Hamilton, calculations of the means necessary to ensure success are presented, and at the same time a project of a different nature is adverted to, in which Hamilton was to have a share. After some consideration, it was determined that the intended attempt on Staten Island should be a feint, and that while the British forces were drawn off into New-Jersey, a descent should be made upon New-York. Hamilton, tired of inactivity, and anxious to signalize himself, became intent on obtaining a separate command, in which he hoped to succeed, aided by the influence of the Marquis. In order to give a more full exposition of his wishes, he addressed to General Washington the following letter.

* This scheme of a dictator, never ripened into a deliberate and extensive plan. It was strongly opposed by Governor Clinton, to whose exertions, on this occasion, great respect is due.

HAMILTON TO WASHINGTON.

November 22d, 1780.

DEAR SIR,

Some time last fall, when I spoke to your excellency about going to the southward, I explained to you candidly my feelings with respect to military reputation, and how much it was my object to act a conspicuous part in some enterprise, that might perhaps raise my character as a soldier above mediocrity. You were so good as to say, you would be glad to furnish me with an occasion. When the expedition to Staten Island was afoot, a favourable one seemed to offer. There was a battalion without a field officer, the command of which, I thought, as it was accidental, might be given to me without inconvenience. I made an application for it through the Marquis, who informed me of your refusal on two principles, — one, that the giving me a whole battalion might be a subject of dissatisfaction; the other, that if any accident should happen to me in the present state of your family, you would be embarrassed for the necessary assistance.

The project you now have in contemplation affords another opportunity. I have a variety of reasons, that press me to desire ardently to have it in my power to improve it. I take the liberty to observe, that the command may now be proportioned to my rank, and that the second objection ceases to operate, as during the period of establishing our winter quarters, there will be a suspension of material business; besides which, my peculiar situation will, in any case, call me away from the army in a few days, and Mr. Harrison may be expected back early next month. My command may consist of one hundred and fifty or two hundred men, composed of fifty men of Major Gibbes' corps, fifty from Colonel Meigs' regiment, and fifty or an hundred more from the light infantry, — Major Gibbes to be my major.

The hundred men from here may move on Friday morning towards ——, which will strengthen the appearances for Staten Island, to form a junction on the other side of the Passaic.

I suggest this mode, to avoid the complaints that might arise from composing my party wholly of the light infantry, which might give umbrage to the officers of that corps, who on this plan can have no just subject for it.

The primary idea may be, if circumstances permit, to attempt with my detachment Byard's Hill. Should we arrive early enough to undertake it, I should prefer it to any thing else, both for the brilliancy of the attempt in itself, and the decisive consequences of which its success would be productive. If we arrive too late to make this eligible, (as there is reason to apprehend,) my corps may form the van of one of the other attacks, and Byard's Hill will be a pretext for my being employed in the affair, on a supposition of my knowing the ground, which is partly true. I flatter myself, also, that my military character stands so well in the army, as to reconcile the officers in general to the measure. All circumstances considered, I venture to say any exceptions which might be taken, would be unreasonable.

I take this method of making the request to avoid the embarrassment of a personal explanation. I shall only add, that however much I have the matter at heart, I wish your excellency entirely to consult your own inclination, and not from a disposition to oblige me, to do any thing that may be disagreeable to you. It will, nevertheless, make me singularly happy if your wishes correspond with mine.

This negotiation was entrusted to La Fayette, whose desire to advance the views of his friend, are thus strongly expressed in the following letters.

LA FAYETTE TO HAMILTON.

Paramus, November 23, 1780.

DEAR HAMILTON,

Here I arrived last night, and am going to set out for Philadelphia. Gouvion goes straight to New-Windsor, and by him I write to the General. I speak of Hand and Smith, whom I recommend, and add, — If, however, you was to cast your eye on a man who, I think, would suit better than any other in the world, Hamilton is, I confess, the officer whom I would like best to see in my * * * *. Then I go on with the idea, that at equal advantages, you deserve from him the preference ; that your advantages are the greatest ; I speak of a co-operation ; of your being in the family ; and conclude, that on every public and private account, I advise him to take you.

I know the General's friendship and gratitude for you, my dear Hamilton ; both are greater than you perhaps imagine. I am sure he needs only to be told that something will suit you, and when he thinks he can do it, he certainly will. Before this campaign I was your friend, and very intimate friend, agreeable to the ideas of the world ; since my second voyage, my sentiment has increased to such a point, the world knows nothing about. To show *both*, from want and from scorn of expressions, I shall only tell you — adieu.

Yours,

LA FAYETTE.

LA FAYETTE TO HAMILTON.

Philadelphia, December 9th, 1780.

DEAR HAMILTON,

On my arrival at Paramus, I wrote a letter to the General, which Colonel Gouvion was to deliver to himself at New-Windsor ; so that more expedition had been made than you had thought. But the General having unfortunately

altered his mind, and taken the road to Morristown, another misfortune threw Hand in his way, and remembering your advices on the occasion, he hastened to make him the proposition, and in consequence of it wrote his letter to congress. From Paramus I went myself to the Lots, and from thence to Morristown, where I met the General, and knowing that my letter could not reach him under some days, I became regardless of your wishes, and made a verbal application in my own name, and about the same time that had been settled between us. I can't express to you, my dear friend, how sorry and disappointed I felt, when I knew from him, the General, that (greatly in consequence of your advice,) he had settled the whole matter with Hand, and written for him to congress. I confess, I became warmer on the occasion than you would perhaps have wished me to be, and I wanted the General to allow my sending an express, who would have overtaken the letter, as it was in the hands of General St. Clair; but the General did not think it to be a convenient measure, and, I confess, I may have been a little blinded on its propriety. I took care not to compromise you in this affair, when the General expressed a desire to serve you, and in a manner you would have been satisfied with. — Now for the voyage to France.

Congress seem resolved that an *Envoy be sent in the way you wish*, and this was yesterday determined in the house. Next Monday the gentleman will be elected. I have already spoken to many members; — I know of a number of voices that will be for you. This day and that of to-morrow will be by me employed in paying visits. As soon as the business is fixed upon, I shall send you an express. I think you ought to hold yourself in readiness, and in case you are called for, come with all possible speed; for you must go immediately, that you may have returned before the beginning of operations. If you go, my dear sir, I shall give you all public or private knowledge about Europe I am possess-

ed of. Besides many private letters, that may introduce you to my friends, I intend giving you the *key* of the cabinet, as well as of the societies which influence them. In a word, my good friend, any thing in my power shall be entirely yours.

The earnest desire, evinced by this letter, that Hamilton should proceed to the Court of France, was a common sentiment among the foreign officers, with whom he was the medium of communication, and who anticipated, with the most sanguine hopes, the benefits of his appointment.

During the progress of these interesting occurrences, Hamilton formed an engagement with the second daughter of General Schuyler, to whom he was married on the fourteenth of December, 1780, at the residence of her father in Albany, and thus became permanently established in the state of New-York.

CHAPTER XIII.

[1781.]

THE privations endured by the army had, at the commencement of this year, produced a general and serious discontent, which first showed itself in a mutiny of the Pennsylvania line, stationed at Morristown. Disregarding the efforts of their officers, and insensible even to the popularity of their commander, General Wayne, they abandoned their quarters, and marched to the vicinity of Trenton, determined to exact relief from the civil authorities, who were obliged to comply with their demands. Within a short time after, a similar spirit manifested itself in a part of the Jersey line; on the intelligence of which General Washington wrote* to congress, stating his determination "to quiet them by force," and Hamilton, by his instructions, directed Colonel Barber "to compel them to unconditional submission," by whose prompt and vigorous measures they were restored to obedience.

The mutineers were invited, by every inducement that Sir Henry Clinton could offer, to join him; but the soldiers, with indignant patriotism, rejected the temptation, and seized and delivered up his emissaries, who were executed on the succeeding day. Congress, cherishing this patriotic feeling, on the representation of Washington, sent them three month's pay in specie. This small aid, though inadequate to their wants, restored them to the belief that the poverty, and not the remissness of the government, had produced their sufferings.

On the sixteenth of January, Colonel Hamilton, whose

* January 23, 1781.

correspondence with General Schuyler became frequent, wrote to him, informing him of these events, and declining a very liberal offer of pecuniary aid. On the twenty-fifth he received the following reply :

DEAR SIR,

Yesterday I received your favour of the sixteenth instant. It affords me pleasure to learn that the Pennsylvania line is reduced to order ; but we, in this quarter, are on the point of experiencing a similar commotion. The two regiments threaten to march to head quarters, unless some money is paid them ; the certificates for the depreciation expedited, and in future to be supplied with provisions.

Yesterday about three thousand bushels of wheat, six hundred pound's worth of beef, and three or four thousand dollars, were *subscribed*. I am in hopes we shall procure what will afford each man about ten dollars, and I have some hopes that this, with a little management, will render them tolerably quiet.*

You cannot, my dear sir, be more happy at the connexion you have made with my family, than I am. Until the child of a parent has made a judicious choice, his heart is in continual anxiety ; but this anxiety was removed on the moment I discovered it was you on whom she had placed her affections. I am pleased with every instance of delicacy in those who are so dear to me ; and I think I read your soul on the occasion you mention. I shall, therefore,

* Governor Trumbull stated that the Connecticut soldiers, whose terms of enlistment had expired, had repaired, in large numbers, to the seaports, in order to engage themselves in privateering ; that an embargo had been laid for the purpose of filling their battalion ; and unless Massachusetts and Rhode-Island acted in concert, her soldiers would repair to their ports with the same intent ; and therefore Connecticut requested those states to lay and continue embargoes for the same purpose.

only entreat you to consider me as one who wishes, in every way, to promote your happiness ; and I shall never give or lend but with a view to such ends. Entreat the General and his lady to accept my best wishes. Do not forget to remember me to Harrison and Tilghman.

Adieu, dear sir,

Most affectionately,

Yours, &c.

PH. SCHUYLER.

Col. Hamilton.

In the preceding year, Hamilton, seeing the constant danger of the dissolution of the army for want of supplies, projected a plan for that purpose, which he anxiously pressed upon congress. The recent occurrences had increased his solicitude to have it brought forward, and he again recalled the attention of General Schuyler to this subject, in reference to which he received a letter of the fifth of February, 1781.

“The reward refused by the Pennsylvania line, evinces a becoming sense of propriety and gallantry. What might not our soldiery be brought to, if properly fed, paid, and clothed ?

“The plan you mention for supplying the armies in America, I should be exceedingly happy to see attempted ; but I fear congress will not venture on it, although they should be convinced of its eligibility. In the course of the last year, I proposed it repeatedly to individual members, who generally approved, and once or twice took occasion to mention it in congress.

“I am persuaded, if it was adopted, that a saving, at present almost inconceivable, would be induced, and an order and economy in the public expenditures, whilst it would reconcile the minds of men to bear the public burthens with alacrity, would effectually eradicate the fears which too ge-

nerally prevail, that we shall sink under the enormous weight of our expenses. I have been a committee of the senate to prepare a letter to congress. It will go by this conveyance. I shall not detail the subject of it, as a copy of it is directed to be sent to the General. I have written for some refuse clothing for the Indians. Permit me to entreat your interposition, to procure some carriages for the transportation of them. Very affectionately, and very proudly,

“Your obedient, humble servant,

“PH. SCHUYLER.”

Colonel Hamilton.

These instances of insubordination hastened the departure of the special envoy, whom congress had chosen to proceed to France. The interesting letter of Colonel Laurens to Hamilton of the eighteenth December, 1779, will be recollected; in which the appointment of the latter, as secretary to the minister at Versailles, is mentioned as having been strongly urged by him. Within a short time after its date, intelligence was received, that his father, Henry Laurens, who had been appointed a commissioner to negotiate a treaty with the United Provinces, had been captured on his voyage, and was immured in the Tower.

This wanton act of severity had excited no less sensation in Europe than in America, and brought out, in a bolder light, the character of this distinguished personage, recently the President of the American Congress, now a prisoner of state.

The appointment of an envoy had been deferred until the latter part of the preceding year. The necessity of a loan, which had been so strongly urged by Hamilton, had led him to advise another visit to France by La Fayette, whose influence had been increased by a recent change in the ministry, and the idea was entertained, that Hamilton might be associated with him, in this interesting mission. But the prospect of active service in the south, had greater charms

for the Marquis, and it was determined, that a member of Washington's family should be appointed in his stead.

The choice was between the two friends, Laurens and Hamilton. The idea of the mission having originated with Hamilton, induced Laurens to defer to him an appointment, which the dull prospects of the army, his sense of the importance of an energetic negotiation, and the high distinction, rendered an object of desire. On the other hand, the news of the capture of his father, would naturally inspire his son with a wish to seize this opportunity of obtaining his release. Hamilton immediately relinquished his pretensions; but the warmth of Laurens' friendship triumphed over his filial feelings, and he urged the consent of Hamilton, with an avowal, that he would prefer confiding to him the fate of his father. A scene of generous contention ensued, mutually honourable, and characteristic. Hamilton prevailed; and on the eleventh of December, Laurens, having signified his assent to congress, was unanimously elected.

The importance of giving a correct view of the state of affairs at this juncture, suggested to Hamilton the idea of a special letter of instructions, in addition to that which had been given to the envoy by congress, being addressed to him by General Washington, which, in the opinion of La Fayette, it was supposed would add additional weight to his representations. This important duty was delegated to Hamilton by Washington, and will be read with interest, as containing a full exposition of the resources and situation of the country at that critical juncture.

WASHINGTON TO LAURENS.

"In compliance with your request, I shall commit to writing the result of our conferences on the present state of American affairs; in which I have given you my opinion with that freedom and explicitness, which the objects of

your commission, my entire confidence in you, and the exigency of our affairs demand.

“1st. To me it appears evident, that, considering the diffused population of these states, the consequent difficulty of drawing together their resources, the composition and temper of a part of their inhabitants, the want of a sufficient stock of national wealth, as a basis for revenue, and the almost total extinction of commerce, the efforts that we have been compelled to make for carrying on the war, have exceeded the natural abilities of this country, and, by degrees, brought us to a crisis that makes the most efficacious and immediate succour from abroad indispensable to our safety.

“2d. That notwithstanding, from the confusion inseparable from a revolution; from our having governments to frame, and every species of civil and military institutions to create; from that inexperience in affairs necessarily incident to a nation in its commencement, some errors may have been committed in the administration of our finances, to which a part of our embarrassments may be attributed; yet they are principally to be ascribed to an essential defect of means, the want of a sufficient stock of wealth, as mentioned in the first article, which want, continuing to operate, will make it impossible, by any interior exertions, to extricate ourselves from those embarrassments, restore the public credit, and furnish the requisite funds for carrying on the war.

“3d. That experience has demonstrated it to be impossible long to support a paper credit without funds for its redemption; that the depreciation of our currency was in the main a necessary effect of the want of those funds; and that its restoration is impossible for the same reason, to which the general diffidence which has taken place among the people is an additional, and, in the present state of things, an insuperable obstacle.

“4th. That the mode which for want of money has been

substituted for supplying the army, by assessing a portion of the productions of the earth, has hitherto been found to be ineffectual ; has frequently left the army to experience the most calamitous distress, and from its novelty and incompatibility with ancient habits is regarded by the people as burthensome and oppressive ; has excited serious discontents, and in some states there appear alarming symptoms of opposition. That this mode has, besides, many particular inconveniences, which contribute to make it inadequate to our exigencies, and ineligible but as an auxiliary.

“ 5th. That the resource of domestic loans is inconsiderable ; because there are, properly speaking, few moneyed men in this country, and the few there are, can employ their money to more advantage otherwise ; besides which, the instability of our currency, and the want of funds, have impaired the public credit. That from the best estimates of the annual expense of the war, and the annual revenues which these states are capable of producing, there is a large balance to be made up by public credit.

“ 6th. That the patience of the army, from an almost uninterrupted series of complicated distress, is now nearly exhausted ; their discontents are matured to an extremity which has recently had the most disagreeable consequences, and demonstrates the absolute necessity of speedy relief. You are too well acquainted with all their sufferings, for want of clothing, for want of subsistence, for want of pay.

“ 7th. That the people begin to be dissatisfied with the present system for the support of the war ; and there is cause to apprehend that evils actually felt in the prosecution of it, may weaken those sentiments which began it, founded, not on immediate sufferings, but on a speculative apprehension of evils to arise in future from the deprivation of our liberties. There is danger that a commercial and free people, little accustomed to heavy burdens, press-

ed by impositions of a new and odious kind, may not make a proper allowance for the necessity of the conjuncture, and may imagine they have only exchanged one tyranny for another.

“ 8th. That from all the foregoing considerations results, first, the absolute necessity of an immediate, ample, and efficacious succour of money, considerable enough to be a foundation for permanent arrangements of finance ; to restore the public credit, and give new life and activity to our future operations. Secondly, the vast importance of a decided effort of the allied arms upon this country the ensuing campaign, to give a fatal blow to the power of the enemy, and secure the great objects of the war, — the liberty and independence of these states. Without the first, we may make a feeble and expiring effort the next campaign, which would, in all probability, be the period of our opposition. With it, we should be in a condition to continue the war as long as the obstinacy of the enemy might require. The first is essential to the last : both combined, would at once bring the contest to a glorious issue ; put the objects of the alliance out of the reach of contingencies ; crown the obligations which America already feels to the magnanimity and generosity of her allies, and perpetuate the union by those ties of gratitude and affection, as well as mutual advantage, which alone can render it solid and indissoluble.

“ 9th. That next to a loan of money, a constant naval superiority on these coasts, is the object which most interests us. This would instantly reduce the enemy to a difficult defensive, and by depriving them of all prospect of extending their acquisitions, would take away the motives for prosecuting the war. Indeed, it is not easy to conceive, how they could subsist a large force in this country, if we had the command of the seas to interrupt the regular transmission of supplies from Europe. This superiority (with

an aid of money) would enable us to convert the operations of the war into a vigorous offensive. I say nothing of the advantages to our trade, nor how infinitely it would facilitate our supplies. In short, it seems to be a deciding point. It appears, too, to be the interest of our allies, abstracted from the immediate benefits to this country, to transfer the whole naval war to America. The number of ports friendly to them and hostile to the British; the materials this country affords for repairing the disabled ships; the large quantities of provisions towards the subsistence of the fleet; are circumstances which would give a palpable advantage to our allies in a naval contest in these seas.

“That notwithstanding the embarrassments under which we labour, and the inquietudes prevailing among the people, there is still a fund of inclination and resources in this country, equal to great and continued exertions; provided we have it in our power to stop the progress of disgust, by changing the present system, by restoring public credit, and by giving activity to our measures; of all which, a powerful succour of money might be the basis. The people are dissatisfied; but it is with the feeble and oppressive mode of conducting the war, not with the war itself. They are not unwilling to contribute to its support, but they are unwilling to do it in a way that renders private property precarious, — a necessary consequence of the fluctuation of the national currency, and of the inability of government to perform its engagements coercively made. A large majority are still firmly attached to its independence; abhor a re-union with Great Britain; and are affectionate to the alliance with France: but this disposition cannot supply the place of the means essential in war, nor can we rely on its continuance amid the perplexities, oppressions, and misfortunes that attend the want of them.

“That no nation will have it more in its power to repay what it may borrow than this. Our debts are small; the

immense tracts of unlocated lands ; the variety and fertility of soils ; the advantages of every kind which we possess for commerce, insure to this country a rapid progress in population and prosperity, and a certainty, its independence being established, of reducing, in a short term of years, the comparatively inconsiderable debts we may have occasion to contract.

“If the foregoing observations will be of any use to you, I shall be happy. I wish you a safe and pleasant voyage, the full accomplishment of your mission, and a speedy return ; — being, with sentiments of perfect friendship, regard, and affection, dear sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ G. W.”*

Colonel Laurens sailed from the United States in the Alliance frigate, on the sixteenth of February, accompanied by Major Jackson, an officer of distinguished gallantry, whose important services during the mission, called forth his repeated and warmest acknowledgements.

Hamilton had now been in the family of the commander-in-chief near four years, and the extent of his services has been partly shown. This connexion, under circumstances of such interest, terminated within a few days after the departure of Laurens. It will be seen, that it was the desire

* It will be observed, by a comparison of this document with that inserted in the diplomatic correspondence, that there is a difference in the disposition of the parts of these instructions, and that the copy given to Laurens was fuller. The difference is not, however, important. The above is copied from the first draft, in Hamilton's autograph, with the exception of the four closing lines, which are added in the handwriting of Washington.—Colonel Hamilton, also, a short time after, drew up a general view of the classification of crimes, and the apportionment of punishments, to be adopted in the army ; condemning the arbitrary punishments which a defective system had produced, and also making a very important suggestion as to the terms and forms of discharges to be granted to the soldiers, both as a reward of merit, and a prevention of desertion.

of both parties that the breach which had occurred should be concealed ; but their relations were too conspicuous to admit of it, and when it became known, the circumstances were variously related, and the facts distorted.

The erroneous statements which have been made on this subject, render necessary the publication of parts of a letter to General Schuyler, written by Hamilton, with the minutest accuracy, within two days after the occurrence, as a vindication of his conduct, in this, one of the most trying moments of his early life.

Head Quarters, New-Windsor, February 18th, 1781.

MY DEAR SIR,

Since I had the pleasure of writing you last, an unexpected change has taken place in my situation. I am no longer a member of the General's family. This information will surprise you, and the manner of the change will surprise you more. Two days ago, the General and I passed each other on the stairs ; — he told me he wanted to speak to me, — I answered that I would wait upon him immediately. I went below, and delivered Mr. Tilghman a letter to be sent to the commissary, containing an order of a pressing and interesting nature.

Returning to the General, I was stopped on the way by the Marquis de La Fayette, and we conversed together about a minute on a matter of business. He can testify how impatient I was to get back, and that I left him in a manner which, but for our intimacy, would have been more than abrupt. Instead of finding the General, as is usual, in his room, I met him at the head of the stairs, where accosting me in an angry tone, "Colonel Hamilton, (said he,) you have kept me waiting at the head of the stairs these ten minutes ; — I must tell you, sir, you treat me with disrespect." I replied, without petulancy, but with decision, "I am not conscious of it, sir, but since you have thought

it necessary to tell me so, we part." "Very well, sir, (said he,) if it be your choice," or something to this effect, and we separated. I sincerely believe my absence, which gave so much umbrage, did not last two minutes.

In less than an hour after, Tilghman came to me in the General's name, assuring me of his great confidence in my abilities, integrity, usefulness, &c., and of his desire, in a candid conversation, to heal a difference which could not have happened but in a moment of passion. I requested Mr. Tilghman to tell him, — 1st. That I had taken my resolution in a manner not to be revoked. 2d. That as a conversation could serve no other purpose than to produce explanations, mutually disagreeable, though I certainly would not refuse an interview, if he desired it, yet I would be happy, if he would permit me to decline it. 3d. That though determined to leave the family, the same principles which had kept me so long in it, would continue to direct my conduct towards him when out of it. 4th. That, however, I did not wish to distress him, or the public business, by quitting him before he could derive other assistance by the return of some of the gentlemen who were absent. 5th. And that in the mean time, it depended on him, to let our behaviour to each other be the same as if nothing had happened. He consented to decline the conversation, and thanked me for my offer of continuing my aid in the manner I had mentioned.

I have given you so particular a detail of our difference, from the desire I have to justify myself in your opinion. Perhaps you may think I was precipitate in rejecting the overture made by the General to an accommodation. I assure you, my dear sir, it was not the effect of resentment; it was the deliberate result of maxims I had long formed for the government of my own conduct.

I always disliked the office of an aid-de-camp, as having in it a kind of personal dependence. I refused to serve in

this capacity with two Major Generals, at an early period of the war. Infected, however, with the enthusiasm of the times, an idea of the General's character overcame my scruples, and induced me to *accept his invitation* to enter into his family * * *. It has been often with great difficulty that I have prevailed upon myself not to renounce it; but while, from motives of public utility, I was doing violence to my feelings, I was always determined, if there should ever happen a breach between us, never to consent to an accommodation. I was persuaded, that when once that nice barrier, which marked the boundaries of what we owed to each other, should be thrown down, it might be propped again, but could never be restored.

The General is a very honest man; — his competitors have slender abilities, and less integrity. His popularity has often been essential to the safety of America, and is still of great importance to it. These considerations have influenced my past conduct respecting him, and will influence my future; — I think it is necessary he should be supported.

His estimation in your mind, whatever may be its amount, I am persuaded has been formed on principles, which a circumstance like this cannot materially affect; but if I thought it could diminish your friendship for him, I should almost forego the motives that urge me to justify myself to you. I wish what I have said to make no other impression, than to satisfy you I have not been in the wrong. It is also said in confidence, as a public knowledge of the breach would, in many ways, have an ill effect. It will, probably, be the policy of both sides to conceal it, and cover the separation with some plausible pretext. I am importuned by such of my friends as are privy to the affair, to listen to a reconciliation; but my resolution is unalterable.

As I cannot think of quitting the army during the war, I have a project of re-entering into the artillery, by taking

Lieutenant Colonel Forrest's place, who is desirous of retiring on half-pay. I have not, however, made up my mind upon this head, as I should be obliged to come in the youngest lieutenant colonel instead of the eldest, which I ought to have been by natural succession, had I remained in the corps; and, at the same time, to resume studies relative to the profession, which to avoid inferiority, must be laborious.

If a handsome command in the campaign in the light infantry should offer itself, I shall balance between this and the artillery. My situation in the latter would be more solid and permanent; but as I hope the war will not last long enough to make it progressive, this consideration has the less force. A command for the campaign, would leave me the winter to prosecute studies relative to my future career in life * * *. I have written to you on this subject with all the freedom and confidence to which you have a right, and with an assurance of the interest you take in all that concerns me.

Very sincerely and affectionately,

I am, dear sir,

Your most obedient servant,

A. HAMILTON.

While giving this representation of an event attended with circumstances of so much delicacy, it is gratifying to remark, that an incident, which, in other individuals, might have tended to lessen our respect, either for one or both of the parties, serves only to add to our higher estimation of each.

Washington, to whom all the world was offering incense, betrayed into the indulgence of a momentary error of temper, makes an advance to conciliation with the friend whose feelings he had injured; while Hamilton, with a high sense of character, and a strong self-reliance, relinquishes a situa-

tion, the object of ambition to many a gallant soldier, and of which the marked confidence of Washington had increased the importance, to re-enter the line of the army, with a doubtful prospect of employment, and possibly the object of hostility to the wounded pride of its chief, and that chief the man whom his country adored.

But the result of his decision demonstrated its wisdom. Losing none of the confidence and respect of Washington, he continued, though unconnected with him by any immediate military relation, to aid him with his counsel on various occasions, until they are seen again, drawn together by mutual regard to the public interests, to the closest and most intimate connexion, which terminated only with their lives.

From the moment Hamilton's separation from the family of Washington was known, such was his standing in the army, that the occurrence was generally regretted. Letters were addressed to him, expressive of the warmest attachment, which, though felt by many, was by none more strongly shown, than by the officers of France, who evinced the deepest interest in his welfare. His high place in the confidence of the commander, gave him an influence in rendering those kindnesses which the situation of foreigners peculiarly required; and his readiness, on all occasions, to promote their wishes, led them to regret his leaving headquarters, as an event by which they had lost a friend, on whose affection they could repose every reliance.

Considerations of mere gratitude or interest were not alone in recommending him to their regard. In the situation of the country, few of its young soldiers had enjoyed those advantages, which enabled them to enter into the gayeties of French manners, and to give zest to a society, of which the usages were so unlike those then prevailing in America. His command of their language, a natural turn for pleasantry, a happy facility in adapting himself to the

character of his associates, a freedom from those prejudices above which persons of the most distinguished merit do not always rise, and his warmth of heart, and romantic temper, rendered him a welcome inmate to their convivialities, and gave him the first place among the American officers in their affections.

La Fayette, his early, his constant, his illustrious friend, as he had been privy to many of the most confidential incidents of Washington's life, and was aware of the importance of Hamilton's services, seemed most to have regretted it, and with the same warmth which he had shown in endeavouring to promote Hamilton's wishes on former occasions, now sought to produce a reconciliation; but, as he says, "when, after having explained the delay privately, he expressed to each of them his own feelings, he found each disposed to believe the other was not sorry for the separation. It did not, however, go farther than leaving the family; the advice of Hamilton has since, in several circumstances, been friendly asked by the commander-in-chief."

The following letters addressed to him, a short time after this event, are indicative of the feelings which were entertained towards him.

LA FAYETTE TO HAMILTON.

Elk, April 10th, 1781.

Where is, for the present, my dear Hamilton? This question is not a mere affair of curiosity. It is not even wholly owing to the tender sentiments of my friendship. But motives, both of a public and private nature, conspire in making me wish that your wo be not accomplished. Perhaps you are at head quarters, perhaps at Albany; at all events, I'll tell you my history.

Had the French fleet come in, Arnold was ours. The more certain it was, the greater my disappointment has been; at last it has become necessary for them to return to Rhode-Island. I think they have exerted themselves for

the common good, and this has been a comfort in our misfortune. Having luckily arrived at Elk by water, which at first I had no right to expect, I have received the General's letter. If you are at head quarters, you will have seen my correspondence with the General; if not, I tell you that I am ordered to the southern army, and the General thinks that the army under his immediate command will remain inactive. After a march of forty days, we will arrive at a time when the heat of the season will put an end to operations. This detachment is so circumstanced, as to make it very inconvenient for officers and men to proceed. Before we arrive, we shall perhaps be reduced to five or six hundred men.

There will be no light infantry formed, — no attack against New-York, — none of those things which had flattered my mind.

If a corps is sent to the southward by land, it ought to have been the Jersey line, because if we weaken ourselves, New-York will be out of the question.

Monsieur Destouches will, I think, propose to the General to send to Philadelphia l'Eveillé, and all the frigates; these, with the frigates now at Philadelphia, would carry fifteen hundred men to whatever part of the continent the General would think proper. We could then go to Morristown, there to form a new corps of light infantry upon the principles at first intended, and embarking in the first days of May, we could be at Wilmington, Georgetown, or any where else, sooner than we can now be by land.

I would have the battalions composed of six companies; — colonels employed, Webb, Sprout, Huntington, Olney, Hull, Barber, Gimat, *Laurens*.; — Majors Willet, Fish, Gibbes, Inspector Smith, —, and another; — Brigadier General Huntington and Scamell, and a good corps of artillery under *****. My dear friend, you would be more important at head quarters; but if you don't stay there,

you know what you have promised to me. Adieu. Write me often and long letters. It is probable I will be in the southern wilderness until the end of the war, far from head quarters, from the French army, from my correspondence with France ; but the whole good I could have operated, in this last instance, must have taken place by this time. My best respects and affectionate compliments wait on Mrs. Hamilton.

Most friendly, yours,

LA FAYETTE.

On the eighteenth, (April,) he writes him from the Susquehanna :

“ DEAR HAMILTON,

“ You are so sensible a fellow, that you can certainly explain to me what is the matter that New-York is given up ; that our letters to France go for nothing ; that while the French are coming, I am going. This last matter gives great uneasiness to the Minister of France. All this is not comprehensible to me, who having been long from head quarters, have lost the course of intelligence.

“ Have you left the family, my dear sir ? I suppose so ; but from love to the General, for whom you know my affection, I ardently wish it was not the case ; — many, many reasons conspire to this desire of mine. But if you do leave it, and if I go to exile, come and partake it with me.

“ Yours,

“ l. f.”

The approaching period of service, and the hopes which began to be indulged of an active campaign, inspired Hamilton with a strong desire to obtain a situation in which he might seize the first opportunity to increase his reputation. The letters of his friends, and especially those receiv-

ed from the Marquis, quickened his wishes, and with a determination to continue in the service until the independence of the country was secured, he now resolved to renew his application for a separate command, which had failed in the preceding autumn ; and with this view addressed the following letter to the commander-in-chief.

SIR,

I imagine your excellency has been informed, that in consequence of the resolution of congress for granting commissions to aid-de-camps appointed under the former establishment, I have obtained one of lieutenant colonel in the army of the United States, bearing rank since the first of March, 1777.

It is become necessary to me to apply to your excellency, to know in what manner you foresee you will be able to employ me in the ensuing campaign. I am ready to enter into activity whenever you think proper ; though I am not anxious to do it till the army takes the field, as before that period I perceive no object.

Unconnected as I am with any regiment, I can have no other command than in a light corps, and I flatter myself my pretensions to this are good.

Your excellency knows I have been in actual service since the beginning of '76. I began in the line, and had I continued there, I ought, in justice, to have been more advanced in rank than I now am. I believe my conduct in the different capacities in which I have acted, has appeared to the officers of the army in general such as to merit their confidence and esteem ; and I cannot suppose them to be so ungenerous as not to see me with pleasure put into a situation still to exercise the disposition I have always had, of being useful to the United States. I mention these things only to show that I do not apprehend the same difficulties can exist in my case, (which is peculiar,) that have opposed

the appointment to commands of some other officers, not belonging to what is called the line.

Though the light infantry is chiefly formed, yet being detached to the southward, I take it for granted there will be a van guard by detachment formed for this army.

I have the honour to be, very respectfully,

Your excellency's most obedient servant,

A. HAMILTON.

De Peyster's Point, April 27, 1781.

The following reply was immediately given.

New-Windsor, April 27th, 1781.

DEAR SIR,

Your letter of this date has not a little embarrassed me. You must remember the ferment in the Pennsylvania line the last campaign, occasioned by the appointment of Major McPherson, and you know the uneasiness which at this moment exists among the eastern officers, on account of the commands conferred upon Colonel Gimat and Major Galvan, although it was the result of absolute necessity.

Should circumstances admit of the formation of another advanced corps, of which I see very little prospect from present appearances, it can be but small, and must be composed almost entirely of eastern troops; and to add to the discontents of the officers of those lines, by the farther appointment of an officer of your rank to the command of it, or in it, would, I am certain, involve me in a difficulty of a very disagreeable and delicate nature, and might, perhaps, lead to consequences more serious than it is easy to imagine. While I adhere firmly to the right of making such appointments as you request, I am, at the same time, obliged to reflect, that it will not do to push that right too far, more especially in a service like ours, and at a time so critical as the present.

I am convinced, that no officer can, with justice, dispute your merit or abilities. The opposition heretofore made had not been for the want of those qualifications in the gentlemen who are, and have been, the objects of discontent. The officers of the line contend, without having reference to particular persons, that it is a hardship and reflection upon them, to introduce brevet officers into commands, (of some permanency,) in which there are more opportunities of distinguishing themselves, than in the line of the army at large, and with the men they have had the trouble to discipline and to prepare for the field. My principal concern arises from an apprehension that you will impute my refusal of your request to other motives than those I have expressed, but I beg you to be assured, I am only influenced by the reasons which I have mentioned.

I am, dear sir,

Your obedient and humble servant,

GEO. WASHINGTON.

Hamilton, deeming his case one which ought to be distinguished from those which Washington had adduced as precedents, wrote him a farther letter, on the second of May.

SIR,

I am extremely sorry to have embarrassed you by my late application, and that you should think there are insuperable obstacles to a compliance with it. Having renounced my expectations, I have no other inducement for troubling your excellency with a second letter, than to obviate the appearance of having desired a thing inconsistent with the good of the service, while I was acquainted with the circumstances that made it so.

I was too interested a spectator of what happened in the case of Major McPherson, not to have remarked, and not to recollect, all the circumstances. The opposition turned,

ostensibly, on his being a brevet officer, yet having a command in a corps formed entirely from one line ; the propriety of his being employed in a detachment from the army at large, so far as I remember, was not disputed. In delicacy to Major McPherson, no personal objections were formally made, but in reality they existed and contributed to the discontent. It was thought a peculiar hardship, that a gentleman who had, for a long time, fought against us, and had not taken part with us till a late period, and when our affairs had assumed a more prosperous aspect, should be preferred in one of the most honorary commands of the service. Your excellency must be convinced, that I mention this in no other view than to show the sentiments of the officers at the time, and the whole grounds of the opposition. My esteem for Major McPherson, and other reasons, make it impossible I can have a different intention.

I know less of the motives of dissatisfaction in the cases of Colonel Gimat and Major Galvan ; but I have understood, that it is founded on their being appointed in the light corps for two successive campaigns.

It would be uncandid in me not to acknowledge, that I believe a disposition to exclude brevet officers in general from command, has a great share in the opposition, in every instance, and that so far it affects my case. But, at the same time, it appears to me, this principle alone can never be productive of more than momentary murmurs, where it is not seconded by some plausible pretext. I also am convinced, that the Pennsylvania officers, for their own sakes, repented the rash steps they had taken, and, on cool reflection, were happy in an opportunity to relinquish their menaces of quitting a service to which they were attached by habit, inclination, and interest, as well as by patriotism. I believe, too, we shall never have a similar instance in the army, unless the practice should be carried to excess. Major Galvan, I am told, will probably be relieved. Colonel Gimat will be

then the only brevet officer remaining in command. Your excellency is the best judge of the proper limits; and there can be no doubt, that the rights of particular officers ought to give place to the general good and tranquillity of the service.

I cannot forbear repeating, that my case is peculiar, and dissimilar to all the former; — it is distinguished by the circumstances I have before intimated, — my early entrance into the service, — my having made the campaign of '76, the most disagreeable of the war, at the head of a company of artillery, and having been entitled, in that corps, to a rank, equal in degree, more ancient in date, than I now possess, — my having made all the subsequent campaigns in the family of the commander-in-chief, in a constant course of important and laborious service. These are my pretensions, at this advanced period of the war, to being employed in the only way which my situation admits; and I imagine they would have their weight in the minds of the officers in general. I only urge them a second time, as reasons which will not suffer me to view the matter in the same light with your excellency, or to regard as impracticable my appointment in a light corps, should there be one formed. I entreat they may be understood in this sense only. I am incapable of wishing to obtain any object by importunity.

I assure your excellency, that I am too well persuaded of your candour, to attribute your refusal to any other cause than an apprehension of inconveniences that may attend the appointment.

I have the honour to be, with perfect respect, sir,

Your most obedient and humble servant,

A. HAMILTON.

P. S. I have used the term brevet in the sense your excellency appears to have understood it, as signifying, in general, all officers not attached to any established corps. Con-

gress, however, seem to have made a distinction ; they give only a kind of warrant to those whom they designate as brevet officers ; mine is a regular commission.

De Peyster's Point, May 2d, 1781.

Within a short time after this correspondence closed, a letter was received from La Fayette, dated Richmond, May 23, 1781.

MY DEAR HAMILTON,

I have been long complaining that I had nothing to do ; and want of employment was an objection I had to my going to the southward. But for the present, my dear friend, my complaint is quite of an opposite nature ; and I have so many arrangements to make, so many difficulties to combat, so many enemies to deal with, that I am just that much of a general as will make me an historian of misfortunes, and nail my name upon the ruins of what good soldiers are pleased to call the army in Virginia.

There is an age past since I heard from you. I acknowledge that, on my part, I have not written so often as I ought to have done ; but you will excuse this silence in favour of my very embarrassing circumstances. However remote you may be from your former post of aid-de-camp to the commander-in-chief, I am sure you are nevertheless acquainted with every transaction at head quarters. My letters have served to your information, and I shall consequently abstain from repetitions.

Our forced march saved Richmond. Philips was going down, and thus far I am very happy. Philips' return, his landing at Brendon, south side of James river, and the unmolested joining of Lord Cornwallis through North Carolina, made me apprehensive of the storm that was gathering. I advanced towards Petersburg, and intended to have established a communication upon James and Appamatox

rivers. Had Philips marched to Halifax, I was determined to follow him, and should have risked every thing rather to omit making a diversion in favour of Greene. But that army took possession of Petersburg, and obliged me to stick to the side of the river, whence reinforcements are expected. Both armies have formed their junction of between four and five thousand men. We have no continentals; their infantry is near five to one; their cavalry ten to one. Our militia are not numerous, without arms, and are not used to war. Government wants energy; and there is nothing to enforce the laws. General Greene has directed me to take command in this state, and I must tell you, by the way, his letter is very polite and affectionate. It then became my duty to arrange the departments, which I found in the greatest confusion and relaxation; nothing can be obtained, and yet expenses are enormous. The Baron, and the few new levies we could collect, are ordered to South Carolina. I am glad he goes, as the hatred of the Virginians to him was pretty hurtful to the service. Is it not strange that General Wayne's detachment cannot be heard of? They are to go to Carolina; but should I have them for a few days, I am at liberty to keep them. This permission I will improve so far as to receive one blow, that, being beat, I may at least be beat with some decency. There are accounts that Lord Cornwallis is very strong, others make him very weak. In this country there is no getting good intelligence. I request you will write me, if you approve of my conduct. The command of the waters, the superiority in cavalry, and the great disproportion of forces, gave the enemy such advantages that I durst not venture out, and listen to my fondness for enterprise; to speak truth, I was afraid of myself as much as of the enemy. Independence has rendered me the more cautious, as I know my own warmth; but if the Pennsylvanians come, Lord Cornwallis shall pay something for his victory.

I wish a reinforcement of *light infantry*, to recruit the battalions, or a detachment under General Huntington was sent to me. I wish Laurens or Sheldon were immediately despatched with some horse. Come here, my dear friend, and command our artillery in Virginia. I want your advice and your exertions. If you grant my request, you will vastly oblige your friend,

LA FAYETTE.

Having completed the details of circumstances of a personal nature, we now return to events of more general interest.

The suggestions which had been made by Hamilton to Mr. Duane, in the preceding summer, although they led to no immediate measures, were presented by the latter to the consideration of his friends in congress, and became the subject of much serious reflection. The diminished importance which that body felt would result from the proposed transfer of their direct patronage, by the abolition of the various subsidiary boards, to executive departments, and the vanity of individuals who had long been most active in the committees, all concurred to delay the measure; but the good sense of congress at last prevailed. The new board of treasury, with all its complicated branches, was found wholly incompetent to its objects, and a committee of congress, which had been appointed to devise a system for the arrangement of "the civil executive departments," reported a plan for the establishment of a secretary of foreign affairs, which was followed by a farther report, recommending* the appointment of a superintendent of finance, a secretary of war, and of the marine; and in the course of the year, Robert R. Livingston was chosen to the department of state, Robert Morris superintendent of finance, Ge-

* February, 1781.

neral McDougal secretary of the marine, and General Lincoln secretary at war.*

The pressure of the exigencies, and more enlightened counsels, which had induced congress to part with such an essential portion of their authority, in the creation of these departments, influenced them, at the same time, to adopt another measure, which, had it been carried into effect, would have at once restored the public credit, secured resources for the discharge of the debt, and established a permanent basis for a general and adequate system of finance. It was a motion, by Dr. Witherspoon, that the United States should be empowered to superintend the commercial regulations of every state, so that none might take place that should be partial, or contrary to the common interest; and that they should be vested with the exclusive right of laying duties on all imported articles; no restriction to be valid, and no such duty to be laid, but with the consent of nine states, with provisions to secure uniformity. The enlarged views embraced in this resolution were not sanctioned; but another measure of great moment was recommended, — that the states should confer on congress the power of levying an impost of five per cent. on imported articles, to be applied to the discharge of the debts incurred for supporting the war, and *to continue until they were discharged.*

* In a letter from Samuel Adams, of the 9th December, 1783, he says, "Power will follow the possession of money, even when it is known that it is not the possessor's property; so fascinating are riches in the eyes of mankind. Were our financier, I was going to say, even an angel from heaven, I hope he will never have so much influence, as to gain the ascendancy over congress, which the first lord of the treasury has long had over the parliament of Britain, — long enough to effect the ruin of that nation. These are the fears which I expressed in congress, when the department was first instituted. I was told, that the breath of congress could annihilate the financier; but I replied, that the time might come, and if they were not careful, it certainly would, when even congress would not dare to blow that breath: whether these fears are the mere creatures of the imagination, you will judge."

On the thirtieth of July, 1777, an adjourned convention of delegates from several states was held at Springfield, which proposed the abolition of a limitation of prices; the gradual "drawing in" of the paper money; and its being funded at an interest of six per cent., and a system of taxation as a mean to this object. This subject was resumed by a convention which assembled at Hartford, in October, 1779, and which adjourned to meet in Philadelphia in the following January, when resolutions were adopted, recommending that Virginia should appoint commissioners to convene at Hartford in the ensuing autumn. The deliberations of this convention produced an early attention to this subject in congress; and in March, 1780, a motion was made by Mr. Burke, of North Carolina, "that the states be requested to pass laws, enabling congress to levy an impost of one per cent. on all *exports* and imports, as a fund for sinking the emissions for carrying on the present war; to continue until a sum equal to the whole of the said emissions shall be collected," which was lost.

Nine commissioners assembled at Hartford, in pursuance of their adjournment, among whom were Judge Hobart and Egbert Benson of New-York. Upon much deliberation, a paper was addressed to congress, which, after touching upon several military matters, recommends, in the sixth article of their proceedings, that an estimate be made of all the *interest* due on loan office certificates, and on all other debts incurred by continental purchasing officers; that taxes should be imposed by congress on certain specific articles; or duties on imports, which the states should authorize them to levy and collect. This authority only to take effect with the concurrence of all the states not in possession of the enemy; the proceeds to be appropriated to the payment of the interest of the debt. A return of the white and black inhabitants was also recommended, and a continental judicature, of three persons, to try offences against

the laws of congress, was suggested. This letter was read in congress, on the twelfth of December, 1780, and in February following, Egbert Benson was appointed procurator.*

The important proposal of a national impost, which became the leading subject of controversy during many years, that on which the whole system of public credit depended, and which may be considered as the most prominent in the train of events that led to the adoption of the federal constitution, was resisted by the jealousy of several of the commercial states, who imagined, that by entrusting congress with the control of their customs, they were parting with every essential attribute of sovereignty.

Nothing seemed left to relieve the finances of the country, but the adoption of some measure by which a new "mass of credit" could be created, and the depreciated paper replaced by a currency of fixed value, adequately sustained. A recent resolution† of congress, passed with but one dissenting voice, "to pay all the debts which had been liquidated in specie value, or which had been, or should be, made payable in specie or its equivalent, actually in specie or its equivalent," and a recommendation to the states to amend their laws, making the bills of credit emitted under the authority of congress a legal tender, so that they should not be a tender in any other manner than at their current value, compared with gold and silver, gave evidence of a sound state of public opinion.

Encouraged by these indications, Hamilton resumed his

* Among the proposals to invigorate the confederation, was one made on the sixteenth March, 1781, that under a construction of the thirteenth article of the confederation, it should be so amended, "that if any state refused to observe all the articles of the confederation, congress should be empowered to authorize the land and naval forces of the United States to compel such state to fulfil its federal engagements, and also to make restraint on its merchandise."

† March sixteenth, 1781.

plan of a national bank, of which the first suggestion was made by him to Robert Morris.

The Bank of Pennsylvania, which had been established in June, though partial in its objects, having been a bank merely of deposit, not of issue, had given congress such aid as predisposed them to the adoption of a more extensive system.

The character of the individual who had been elected superintendent of finance, encouraged Hamilton to hope for the attainment of his project; and with this view, on the thirtieth of April, 1781, he addressed an elaborate letter to Mr. Robert Morris, the fruits of his leisure, since he had been relieved from the duties of aid-de-camp, discussing at large the causes of the depreciation, and indicating the means of raising the value of the currency, and at the same time enclosing a charter for a bank to be incorporated by congress.

This plan was prefaced by the following observations :

April 30th, 1781.

I was among the first who were convinced that an administration by single men was essential to the proper management of the affairs of this country. I am persuaded it is the only resource we have to extricate ourselves from the distresses which threaten the subversion of our cause. It is palpable that the people have lost all confidence in our public councils, and it is a fact, of which I dare say you are as well apprized as myself, that our friends in Europe are in the same disposition. I have been in a situation that has enabled me to obtain a better idea of this than most others, and I venture to assert, that the court of France will never give half the succours to this country while congress hold the reins of administration in their own hands, which they would grant if these were entrusted to individuals of established reputation, and conspicuous for probity, abilities, and fortune.

With respect to ourselves, there is so manifest and rooted a diffidence of the government, that if we could be assured the future measures of congress would be dictated by the most perfect wisdom and public spirit, there would be still a necessity for a change in the forms of our administration, to give a new spring and current to the passions and hopes of the people. To me it appears evident, that an executive ministry, composed of men with the qualifications I have described, would speedily restore the credit of government abroad and at home ; would induce our allies to great exertions in our behalf ; would inspire confidence in moneyed men in Europe, as well as in America, to lend us those sums of which it may be demonstrated we stand in need, from the disproportion of our national wealth to the expenses of the war.

I hope, sir, you will not consider it a compliment, when I assure you that I heard, with the greatest satisfaction, of your nomination to the department of finance.

In a letter of mine last summer to Mr. Duane, urging, among other things, the plan of an executive ministry, I mentioned you as the person who ought to fill that department. I know of no other in America who unites so many advantages ; and, of course, every impediment to your acceptance is to me a subject of chagrin. I flatter myself, congress will not preclude the public from your services, by an obstinate refusal of reasonable conditions ; and as one deeply interested in the event, I am happy in believing you will not easily be discouraged from undertaking an office, by which you may render America and the world no less a service than the establishment of American independence. 'Tis by introducing order into our finances, by restoring public credit, not by gaining battles, that we are finally to attain our object. 'Tis by putting ourselves in a condition to continue the war, not by temporary, violent, and unnatural efforts to bring it to a decisive issue, that we shall in

reality bring it to a speedy and successful one. In the frankness of truth, I believe, sir, you are the man best capable of performing this great work.

In expectation that all difficulties will be removed, and that you will ultimately act on terms you approve, I take the liberty to submit to you some ideas, relative to the objects of your department. I pretend not to be an able financier. It is a part of administration which has been least in my way, and of course has least occupied my inquiries and reflections; neither have I had leisure or materials to make accurate calculations. I have been obliged to depend on memory for important facts, for want of the authorities from which they are drawn.

With all these disadvantages, my plan must necessarily be crude and defective; but it may be a basis for something more perfect, or if it contains any hints that may be of use to you, the trouble I have taken myself, or may give you, will not be misapplied. At any rate, the confidence I have in your judgement, assures me that you will receive with pleasure communications of this sort. If they contain any thing useful, they will promote your views, and the public benefit; if not, the only evil is the trouble of reading them; and the best informed will frequently derive lights even from the reveries of projectors and quacks. There is scarcely any plan so bad as not to have something good in it. I trust mine to your candour, with this apology, — you will at least do justice to my intention.

With these preliminary remarks, he proceeds to the inquiry as to “what ought to be done in the finances of the United States?” First, to estimate its capacity for revenue, and the proportion between its abilities and its wants, by examining the proportion the revenues other countries have borne to their wealth, and applying the rule to America. Second, by comparing the result of that rule with the

product of taxes in those states which have been most earnest in taxation.

The result obtained, by an examination applied to Great Britain, France, and the United Provinces was, that the revenue is one fourth of the circulating cash in commercial countries, so far as this is a just representative of its labour and commodities.

He then states the current cash of America, previous to the war, to have been about thirty millions of dollars, of which one eighth was specie ; and that the proper revenue, at that time, was seven and a half million of dollars. But as the system of taxation was carried to an extreme in those countries, that the rule is inapplicable in its full extent to the United States ; though a much larger amount than might be expected, could be levied during the war, without burthening the poorer classes, from the greater equality of fortunes, and a more equal division of the public burthens. — Making the necessary qualifications, he arrives at the result, that the present revenue was one fifth less than it had been before the war. Having adverted to the causes of the diminished circulation, which he considers as principally artificial, he comes to the conclusion, allowing for the diminution of foreign trade, and the loss of territory, that the states have a nett revenue of six millions of dollars ; a result which is nearly confirmed by a detailed examination of the previous product of the taxes, of which Massachusetts was supposed to have raised one fifth.

Taking this as the amount of revenue, he next proceeds to ascertain, by general rules, the military capacity of the country, which although it had at times risen to thirty thousand men, might be estimated at twenty thousand. The expenses incident to the support of which force, with the necessary civil expenditures, rendering the amount of the annual charges of the country less than eleven million of dollars, left a deficit of four and a half millions to be supplied

by credit, foreign or domestic. He then examines the prospect from foreign loans, which taking into view the political and financial embarrassments of France, he supposes may justify an expectation of a loan annually of eight or ten million of livres, which would only meet a third of the national wants.

From Spain, after remarking on her cold and passive policy, in pursuance of which the bills drawn on her, though not rejected, had not been paid, he expects nothing. "Their method of prosecuting the war, can scarcely be resolved into Spanish supineness, but seems to have a more corrupt original. A bigotted prince, governed by a greedy confessor, is a character on which little dependence can be placed."

Holland, as a government, stands in need of all its credit for its own uses. But from the Dutch capitalists much might be expected, though not on the faith of the United States, by the establishment of a system such as he is about to propose. The prospects of internal loans to government, both from the want of confidence, and the more advantageous terms of traffic in which individual wealth could be employed, he rates very low.

"To surmount these obstacles," he observes, "and give individuals ability and inclination to lend, a plan might be devised which, by incorporating their means together, and uniting them with those of the public, will, on the foundation of that incorporation and union, erect a mass of credit that will supply the defect of moneyed capital, and answer all the purposes of cash. A plan which will not only advance the interest of the lenders, secure the independence of their country, and in its progress have the most beneficial influence upon its future commerce, but be a source of national strength and wealth. I mean," he says, "the institution of a national bank. This I regard, in some shape or other, as an expedient essential to our safety and suc-

cess, unless by a happy turn of European affairs, the war should speedily terminate, in a manner upon which it would be unwise to reckon. There is no other that can give to government that extensive and systematic credit, which the defect of our revenues makes indispensably necessary to its operations. The longer it is delayed, the more difficult it becomes. Our affairs grow every day more relaxed and more involved. Public credit hastens to a more irretrievable catastrophe. The means for executing the plan are exhausted in partial and temporary efforts. The loan now making in Massachusetts, would have gone a great way in establishing the funds on which the bank must stand.

“I am aware of all the objections that have been made to public banks, and that they are not without enlightened and respectable opponents. But all that has been said against them only tends to prove, that like all other good things, they are subject to abuse, and when abused, become pernicious. The precious metals, by similar arguments, may be proved to be injurious. It is certain that the monies of South America have had great influence in banishing industry from Spain, and sinking it in real wealth and importance. Great power, commerce, and riches, or, in other words, great national prosperity, may, in like manner, be denominated evils; for they lead to insolence, an inordinate ambition, a vicious luxury, licentiousness of morals, and all those vices which corrupt a government, enslave the state, and precipitate the ruin of a nation. But no wise statesman will reject the good, from an apprehension of the ill. The truth is, in human affairs there is no good, pure and unmixed. Every advantage has two sides; and wisdom consists in availing ourselves of the good, and guarding, as much as possible, against the bad.

“The tendency of a national bank is to increase public and private credit. The former gives power to the state, for the protection of its rights and interests, and the latter fa-

cilitates and extends the operations of commerce among individuals.

“Industry is increased, commodities are multiplied, agriculture and manufactures flourish, and herein consist the true wealth and prosperity of a state.

“Most commercial nations have found it necessary to institute banks; and they have proved to be the happiest engines that ever were invented for advancing trade. Venice, Genoa, Hamburgh, Holland, and England, are examples of their utility. They owe their riches, commerce, and the figure they have made at different periods, in a great degree, to this source. Great Britain is indebted for the immense efforts she has been able to make in so many illustrious and successful wars, essentially to that vast fabric of credit, raised on this foundation. 'Tis by this alone, she now menaces our independence. She has indeed abused the advantage, and now stands on a precipice. Her example should both persuade and warn us. 'Tis in republics, where banks are most easily established and supported, and where they are least liable to abuse. Our situation will not expose us to frequent wars, and the public will have no temptation to overstrain its credit.

“In my opinion, we ought not to hesitate, because we have no other resource. The long and expensive wars of King William had drained England of its specie; its commerce began to droop for want of a proper medium; its taxes were unproductive, and its revenues declined. The administration wisely had recourse to the institution of a bank, and it retrieved the national difficulties. We are in the same, and still greater want, of a sufficient medium. We have little specie; the paper we have is of small value, and rapidly declining to less. We are immersed in a war for our existence as a nation, for our liberty and happiness as a people. We have no revenues, nor no credit. A bank, if practicable, is the only thing that can give us either the

one or the other. Besides these great and cardinal motives to such an institution, and the advantages we should enjoy from it in common with other nations, our situation, relatively to Europe and to the West Indies, would give us some peculiar advantages.

“Nothing is more common than for men to pass from the abuse of a good thing to the disuse of it. Some persons, disgusted by the depreciation of the money, are chimerical enough to imagine it would be beneficial to abolish all paper, and annihilate the whole of what is now in circulation, and depend altogether upon specie, both for commerce and finance. The scheme is altogether visionary, and in the attempt would be fatal. We have not a competent stock of specie in this country, either to answer the purpose of circulation in trade, or to serve as a basis for revenue. The whole amount of what we have, I am persuaded, does not exceed six millions of dollars, one-fifth of the circulating medium before the war. To suppose this would be sufficient for the operations of commerce, would be to suppose that our domestic and foreign commerce were both reduced four-fifths; a supposition that carries absurdity on the face of it. It follows, that if our paper money were destroyed, a great part of the transactions of traffic must be carried on by barter; a mode inconvenient, partial, confined; destructive both of commerce and industry. With the addition of the paper we now have, this evil exists in too great a degree.”

Having shown that if all the specie could be drawn into the treasury annually, the consequence of such a measure, which never was effected in any country, would be a complete stagnation of business; and that a recourse to taxes in kind, would prove wholly inefficacious, he proceeds to observe, —

“The error of those who would explode paper money altogether, originates in not making proper distinctions. Our paper was, in its nature, liable to depreciation, because

it had no funds for its support, and was not upheld by private credit. The emissions under the resolution of March, 1780, have partly the former advantage, but are destitute of the latter, which is equally essential. No paper credit can be substantial or durable, which has not funds, and which does not unite immediately the interest and influence of the moneyed men, in its establishment and preservation. A credit begun on this basis will, in process of time, greatly exceed its funds; but this requires time, and a well settled opinion in its favour. 'TIS IN A NATIONAL BANK ALONE THAT WE CAN FIND THE INGREDIENTS TO CONSTITUTE A WHOLE-SOME, SOLID, AND BENEFICIAL PAPER CREDIT."

The length to which these extracts have extended does not warrant the publication more at large of this elaborate document. A mere outline of the plan, consisting of twenty articles, is all that will now be given.

The capital of the bank was to consist of a stock of three millions of dollars, divided into thirty thousand shares, to be exempted from all taxes and impositions.

The subscription, according to the respective amounts, to be in proportionate quantities of specie, personal, and landed securities; the object being to secure the largest possible amount of specie. The bank to have all legal corporate immunities, and the stock to be protected from attachment, making each member of the incorporation liable, by suit, to the extent of his stock.

The privilege of subscribing for one half of the capital stock, to be reserved to the United States, to the particular states, or to foreigners, and the United States to become conjointly responsible with the private proprietors, for all the transactions of the bank, which was to be authorized to issue notes, with and without interest, a part only payable in America, the residue in Europe. The aggregate of the notes not to exceed the amount of the bank stock; with a power to lend at an interest not to exceed eight per

cent., and to borrow to the amount of one half of its stock, — to purchase estates, by principal or by annuities, — to have the privilege of coining, to the amount of one half of its stock, (the quantity of alloy, &c. to be determined by congress,) and to have, also, the power of discounting foreign bills of exchange, — to receive deposits of plate or money, which deposits were to be exempt from taxation, — to have the right of contracting with the French government, for the supply of its fleets and armies in America, and to contract with congress for the supply of their armies, — with a condition to lend the United States, on a certain unalienable fund of one hundred and ten thousand four hundred pounds per annum, the sum of twelve hundred thousand pounds, at an interest of eight per cent., payable in twenty years, or sooner, at the option of congress, and a similar rate to govern all future loans; for which fund the United States, and the individual states, to be severally pledged.

The bank to become responsible for the redemption of all the paper; the old, at forty for one, in parts of one third, at the end of every ten years, with interest at five per cent.; the new, as specie, in six years, so as to fulfil the previous engagements of congress; for which responsibility, adequate funds, payable to the bank, equal to the discharge of the whole paper currency in thirty years, bearing an interest of two per cent., were to be established.

The bank notes to be received in payment of all public customs and taxes, at an equivalent with gold and silver, with power to dissolve itself at pleasure, having made effectual provision for the payment of its debts. Its stock to be transferable. To be chartered for thirty years, and no other bank, public or private, to be permitted during that period. Three offices to be established, one in each of the states of Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, to facilitate the circulation and payment of the bank notes; the whole to be managed by twelve general directors, eight

to be chosen by the private proprietors, and four by congress; the minister of finance having the privilege of inspecting all their proceedings.

A full examination of the principles of the proposed institution would exceed the proper limits of this work, but a few desultory observations on some of the features of this plan, may not be misplaced.

The introduction of landed security, as a part of the capital stock, is the provision which, in a merely commercial view, might perhaps have been deemed most objectionable. But it is to be remembered, that commercial convenience was merely an incidental consideration. The primary object was similar to that of the bank of England; after absorbing the previous issues, to obtain a monopoly of the circulation, and by that means to secure a safe and uniform currency.

But had the sole purpose of Colonel Hamilton been the granting facilities to trade, it is by no means obvious that his plan would have been less effective.

It is true, that the country would not furnish an adequate amount of specie, or of equivalent available personal securities to fill the stock; and that for this reason, the deficiency was sought to be supplied by landed security. But this landed security, though less readily convertible than the government debt of England, which forms the basis of its bank, might be pledged for an amount of cash of relative value, and there would still exist the use of the lands, and the use of the value of its representative.

That the landed security was not convertible to meet the immediate wants of the bank, would be less objectionable, in the minds of those who entertain the opinion, not without strong reasons, that the capital of a bank should remain a permanent vested fund, upon which to base a credit, not a fund to be appropriated to its current uses.

It is possible that this provision might have diminished

the number of merely moneyed subscribers; but as this plan was to go into operation, at a time when the prevailing distrust of paper securities would dispose individuals, amidst a choice of evils, to prefer an institution which would furnish this additional support, to a capital of which the specie component was the most alluring ingredient, this disadvantage would have been more than compensated.

The power of coining money, was introduced merely to enable the bank to convert its plate into specie; but it was a power which, under proper checks, might have been extended with advantage.

The privilege of contracting with the French government, for the supply of its armies, was highly desirable from this consideration, that the greater part of the specie was derived from the expenditures of France, and passing through the bank, would have increased its credit and efficiency, while the great profits to be derived from the contracts, would have offered large inducements to subscribers.

The article which rendered the bank responsible for the redemption of the existing paper, had in view the importance of relieving the country from a fluctuating medium, which infected all credit. The amount of the annuity to be secured by congress to the bank, was not fixed, from the difficulty of estimating the whole amount of the government issues; a difficulty which was increased by this circumstance, that this plan proposed to embrace all the State emissions, as essential to every efficient scheme of finance, — a fact of high interest, in reference to the great question of the “Assumption,” which threatened an insuperable obstacle to the fiscal system of the present government.

The permission to the bank to dissolve or sell at pleasure, was introduced to encourage men to adventure in it,

from a confidence, that when once engaged, the profits would induce them to continue.

In reply to the inquiry, where funds are to be procured, in the present impotent state of the federal government, Colonel Hamilton says, "I answer, there are ample means, and they must be had. Congress must deal plainly with their constituents; they must tell them that power without revenue, is a bubble; that unless they give them substantial resources of the latter, they will not have enough of the former either to prosecute the war, or to maintain the union in peace; that in short, they must, in justice to the public, and to their own honour, renounce the vain attempt of carrying on the war without either, — a perseverance in which can only deceive the people, and betray their safety. They must demand an instant, positive, and perpetual investiture of an impost on trade; a land tax and a poll tax to be collected by their own agents. This act to become a part of the confederation. It has ever been my opinion, that congress ought to have complete sovereignty in all but the mere municipal law of each state, and I wish to see a CONVENTION OF ALL THE STATES, with full power to alter and amend, finally and irrevocably, the present futile and senseless confederation."

After stating the plan of the bank, "these," he says, "as has already been observed, are only intended as outlines. The form of administration for the bank, and all other matters, may be easily determined. If the leading principles are once approved, we shall find good models in the different European banks, which we can accommodate to our circumstances. Great care, in particular, should be employed to guard against counterfeits; and, I think, methods may be devised that will be effectual.

"I see nothing to prevent the practicability of a plan of this kind, but a distrust of the final success of the war, which may make men afraid to risk any considerable part of their

fortunes in the public funds ; but without being an enthusiast, I will venture to assert, that with such a resource as is here proposed, the loss of our independence is impossible. All we have to fear is, that the want of money may disband the army, or so perplex and enfeeble our operations, as to create in the people a general disgust and alarm, which may make them clamour for peace on any terms. But if a judicious administration of our finances, assisted by a bank, takes place, and the ancient security of property is restored, no convulsion is to be apprehended ; our opposition will soon assume an aspect of system and vigour, that will *relieve* and *encourage* the people, and put an end to the hopes of the enemy. 'Tis evident, they have it not in their power to subdue us by force of arms ; — in all these states they have not more than fifteen thousand effective troops, nor is it possible for them much to augment this number. The East and West Indies demand reinforcements. In all the islands they have not, at this time, above five thousand men ; a force not more than equal to the proper garrisoning of Jamaica alone, and which, the moment they lose a maritime superiority in those seas, will leave them much cause to fear for their possessions. They will probably send out fifteen hundred or two thousand men to recruit their regiments already here, but this is the utmost they can do.

“Our allies have five thousand men at Rhode-Island, which in the worst event that can happen, will be recruited to eight, to co-operate with us on a defensive plan. — Should our army amount to no more than fifteen thousand men, the combined forces, though not equal to the expulsion of the enemy, will be equal to the purpose of compelling them to renounce their offensive, and content themselves with maintaining one or two capital points. This is on the supposition, that the public have the means of putting their troops in activity. By stopping the progress of their conquests, and reducing them to an unmeaning and disgrace-

ful defensive, we destroy the national expectation of success, from which the ministry draw their resources. They are in a situation, where the want of splendid successes is ruin. They have carried taxation nearly to its extreme boundary ; they have mortgaged all their funds ; they have a large unfunded debt, besides the enormous mass which is funded. This must necessarily create apprehensions in their most sanguine partizans, and if these are not counteracted by flattering events, from time to time, they cannot much longer continue the delusion. Indeed, in that case, I suppose they must themselves despair. The game we play, is a sure game, if we play it with skill. I have calculated, in the preceding observations, on the most disadvantageous side ; *many events may turn up in the course of the summer, to make even the present campaign decisive."*

On the twenty-sixth of May, the following reply was received from the Superintendent of Finance.

ROBERT MORRIS TO COLONEL HAMILTON.

SIR,

It is some time since I received your performance, dated the thirtieth April last. I have read it with that attention which it greatly deserves, and finding many points of it to coincide with my own opinions on the subject, it naturally strengthened that confidence which every man ought to possess, to a certain degree, in his own judgement. You will very soon see the plan of a bank published, and subscriptions opened for its establishment, having already met with the approbation of congress. It only remains for individuals to do their part, and a foundation will be laid for the anticipation of taxes and funds, by a paper credit that cannot depreciate. The capital proposed, falls far short of your idea, and, indeed, far short of what it ought to be ; but the capital may afterwards be increased to almost any amount. To propose a larger sum in the outset, and fail

in the attempt to raise it, might prove fatal ; to begin with what is clearly in our power to accomplish, and on that beginning to establish the credit that will inevitably command the future increase of capital, seems the most certain road to success. I have thought much about interweaving a land security with the capital of this bank, but am apprehensive it would convey to the public mind an idea of paper being circulated on that credit ; and that the bank, of consequence, must fail in its payments in case of any considerable run on it, and we must expect that its ruin will be attempted by external and internal foes. I have, therefore, left that point to the future deliberations of the directors of this bank, to whom, in due time, I shall communicate your address. I esteem myself much your debtor for this piece, not merely on account of the personal respect you have been pleased to express, but also on account of your good intentions ; and for these, and the pains you have taken, I not only think, but on all proper occasions shall say, the public are also indebted to you.

My office is new, and I am young in the execution of it. Communications from men of genius and abilities will always be acceptable, and yours will ever command the attention of

Sir, your obedient, humble servant,

ROBT. MORRIS.

Col. Alex. Hamilton, of the Artillery.

The plan referred to in the preceding letter was submitted to congress on the seventeenth, adopted on the twenty-sixth*, and published, with an address from Mr. Morris, on the twenty-eighth of May, 1781.

* The votes on this question, give an important indication of the views of congress, at that day, on this "constructive power." Of the eleven states present, eight, viz. New-Hampshire, Rhode-Island, Connecticut, New-Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina, and Georgia, were in favour. Massachusetts was against it, with one vote from Pennsylvania. *Of the four members from Virginia, James Madison was alone in the negative.*

The capital was four hundred thousand dollars, in shares of four hundred dollars each, payable in gold or silver. Its notes were made payable on demand, and receivable for taxes: a power was given to enlarge the capital: the superintendent of finance was authorized to inspect the books; and on the last day of the year, an ordinance passed, incorporating it under the name of the Bank of North America.

Great as was the merit of Mr. Morris in the suggestion of this plan, he acquired a still stronger title to applause for the skill, energy, and judgement, with which it was carried into execution.

His principal reliance for a supply of coin, was founded upon an engagement of the Governor General of Havana to remit to the United States four hundred thousand dollars in specie, to be repaid by annual shipments of flour, which were to be guaranteed by France, but which engagement was not fulfilled.

It has been stated that the whole specie capital of this bank, when it commenced its operations, did not exceed forty thousand dollars; and such was the apprehension of this small resource being exhausted, that persons were employed, during the earlier part of its existence, to follow those who had demanded specie and obtain it from them, at any price, so as to return it into the coffers of the bank.

This institution, nevertheless, soon obtained extensive confidence; ministered largely to the wants of government; and after its utility had been fully tested in furnishing a medium of exchange throughout the states, as safe and more convenient than the precious metals; relief in the payment of the public burthens; increased facilities to the internal and external commerce of the country; the state of Pennsylvania, by which it also had been incorporated, under the delusion of popular prejudice repealed its charter, on the extraordinary ground of the dangerous influence of foreign

capital on the free institutions of the country ; forgetting, that without such capital, that freedom, and those institutions, would probably not have been established : but the returning good sense of the state renewed the charter the ensuing year.

The project for a convention of the states, which Hamilton first proposed in his letter to Mr. Duane, seems not to have met with much countenance in congress ; but the exposition which he had given of the defects of the existing government, enforced by the embarrassments with which that body found themselves perpetually clogged, rendered an enlargement of the powers of the confederation a subject of frequent and anxious deliberation.

Aware of the impediments which public opinion would interpose to the successful attainment of this great object, Hamilton commenced, at this time, a series of numbers, under the title of “*The CONTINENTALIST*.”

The earlier essays were published in July and August, 1781. They were then suspended until after the surrender of York Town, when they were resumed, at intervals, and continued during a part of the succeeding year. Many of them are lost, but a sufficient number remain to show the design of the publication. The first part was devoted to an examination of the defects of the existing league, and to an exposure of the groundless jealousy of power to which he attributed the hostility of the people to an enlargement of the authority of the federal government. Several of the essays on this branch of the subject, cannot be found. The succeeding numbers are occupied with a brief enumeration of the powers with which the government ought to be clothed. Of these, the principal were, first, the power of regulating trade ; comprehending a right of granting bounties and premiums, by way of encouragement ; of imposing duties of every kind, as well for revenue as regulation ; of appointing all officers of the customs, and of laying embar-

goes in extraordinary emergencies. Second, a moderate land tax, at a specific rate, to be granted to the federal government in *perpetuity*, and to be levied, (if congress think proper,) by their own collectors. Third, a moderate capitation tax. Fourth, the disposal of all unlocated land, for the benefit of the United States. Fifth, a certain proportion of the product of all the mines existing in the United States ; and sixth, the appointment of all the land and naval officers by congress.

Much space is allotted, to show the necessity of conferring on the general government specific funds, under their exclusive control, as a basis upon which he proposed to build up a system of public credit, and the same reasons are recapitulated at large, which are contained in the elaborate letter to Mr. Morris ; one consideration is worthy of remark, — notwithstanding the zeal with which the establishment of permanent funds is advocated, both in this, and all his other financial papers, there will be observed the most scrupulous care to introduce provisions in every scheme of finance, of which he was the author, to operate as a check upon the proneness of governments to incur debts, and insure their discharge, as fast as might be consistent with public convenience.

The necessity of conferring the power of regulating trade, in its fullest sense, both by bounties and prohibitions, is clearly and strongly stated ; and the consequences of conflicting state tariffs, distinctly portrayed. But while this essential attribute of national sovereignty is claimed, a similar discretion is evinced, as to the extent to which this power should be exercised. “ Easy duties on commerce ” are contended for, in order to lighten the charges on production ; and while the necessity is shown of granting to the federal government adequate funds, the policy of its relying on a compound of permanent and occasional supplies is exhibited. “ The federal government,” he says, “ should neither be in-

dependent, nor too much dependent. It should neither be raised above responsibility or control, nor should it want the means of maintaining its own weight, authority, dignity, and credit. To this end, permanent funds are indispensable; but they ought to be of such a nature, and so moderate in their amount, as never to be inconvenient."

The collection of the national revenues, by officers appointed by congress, is shown to be essential to the success of the system, and is urged from the farther consideration, that their appointment, and also that of all military officers, of every rank, would be the means of creating, in the interior of each state, a mass of influence in favour of the federal government. "The great danger," he says, has been shown to be, "that it will not have power enough to defend itself, and preserve the union; not that it will ever become formidable to the general liberty. A mere regard to the interests of the confederacy will never be a principle sufficiently active to curb the ambition and intrigues of different members. Force cannot effect it.

"A contest of arms will seldom be between the common sovereign and a single refractory member, but between distinct combinations of the several parts against each other; a sympathy of situations, will be apt to produce associates to the disobedient. The application of force is always disagreeable; the issue uncertain. It will be wiser to obviate the necessity of it, by interesting such a number of individuals in each state in support of the federal government, as will be a counterpoise to the ambition of others, and will make it difficult for them to unite the people in opposition to the just and necessary measures of the union. There is something noble and magnificent in the perspective of a great **FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC**, closely linked in the pursuit of a common interest, tranquil and prosperous at home, respectable abroad; there is something proportionably diminutive and contemptible, in the prospect of a number of

petty states, with the appearance only of union, — jarring, jealous, and perverse, — without any determined direction, — fluctuating and unhappy at home, weak and insignificant by their dissensions in the eyes of other nations. Happy America, if those to whom thou hast entrusted the guardianship of thy infancy, know how to provide for thy future repose, but miserable and undone, if their negligence or ignorance permits the spirit of discord to erect her banners on the ruins of thy tranquillity !”

Such were the sentiments of a man, whose views have been so much, and so designedly misrepresented; whose strong solicitude for the liberties of America, saw in the constitutional strength of each department of government, the only security against usurpation; who sought to connect with every grant of power, its appropriate check; and who having advised every precaution for the public safety, which the most prudent foresight could suggest, believed that a generous confidence on the part of the people, was as essential to their happiness, as an honest administration by their rulers.

CHAPTER XIV.

[1781.]

THE urgent representations made to congress by the French minister, M. de la Luzerne, of the reluctance of the French court to extend their aids beyond what had already been granted, — the intimation that the state of Europe might possibly lead France to an arrangement, which, as the best terms that could be obtained for the United States, would be founded on the principle of *uti possidetis*, and the difficulties which Colonel Laurens had encountered in his mission, all concurred to prompt an attempt upon New-York, which had been abandoned in the previous autumn, and which the letters of La Fayette show, was now in contemplation. General Washington, early in this year, (but at what precise time we are unable to state,) proceeded to Newport, for the purpose of concerting measures with General Rochambeau, in which journey, it would appear, from the following note, without date, that notwithstanding their recent difference, he was attended by Colonel Hamilton, — which is also of importance to show, that the difference which had taken place, had produced no diminution of respect in the breast of the General.

DEAR HAMILTON,

I shall be obliged to you for the answer to the address, as soon as it is convenient to you. If we do not ride to the Point to see the fleet pass out, I am to have a conference with Count de Rochambeau, and the engineer, directly after breakfast, at which I wish you to be present.

I am, sincerely and affectionately, yours,

GEO. WASHINGTON.

Half past —, A. M.

This interview having taken place, Washington returned to the army, and immediately ordered them from their quarters, with directions to encamp at Peekskill, whence they moved down the eastern banks of the Hudson, waiting the junction of the French forces, which soon after marched.

The advance having arrived, on the sixth of July an expedition was pushed forward, under General Lincoln, in the hope of surprising the enemy's works at King's Bridge. After an unimportant skirmish, the detachment returned to the main body, then at Dobbs' Ferry, a position on the Hudson, a little more than twenty miles from New-York, where the American army crossed in the disastrous retreat of 1776.

Hamilton, who had proceeded to Albany, after his return from Newport, anxious to take part in the interesting operations which were about to occur, finding his application for a command unattended to, determined to bring the question to a definitive issue. The following extract from a letter written to Mrs. Hamilton, gives the course of this affair.

Camp, near Dobbs' Ferry, July 10th, 1781.

"The day before yesterday I arrived here, but for want of an opportunity could not write any sooner; indeed, I know of none now. Finding, when I came here, that nothing was said on the subject of a command, I wrote the General a letter, and enclosed him my commission. This morning Tilghman came to me in his name, pressed me to retain my commission, with an assurance that he would endeavour, by all means, to give me a command, nearly such as I could have desired in the present circumstances of the army. Though I know you would be happy to hear I had rejected this proposal, it is a pleasure my reputation would not permit me to afford you. I consented to retain my commission, and accept the command. I quarter, at present, by a very polite and warm invitation, with General Lincoln, and experience from the officers of both armies every mark of esteem."

It was at this post that Washington first received the intelligence that the squadron of De Grasse was approaching the coast of Virginia. A council of war was held, to which Hamilton was invited by General Washington. The plan of a southern campaign was then discussed, and though reluctant to relinquish the attempt on New-York, so long entertained, it was determined, for the most cogent reasons, to make a forced march on Lord Cornwallis.

It became of the utmost importance to conceal this purpose. The idea was thrown out, that the French fleet was expected at Shrewsbury, and that the army was to march and join it there ; and, to complete the deception, lines for an encampment were marked out on the Jersey side, ovens constructed, and a body of men advanced, as if to take a position for the combined forces. At this particular crisis, Washington felt the full value of his exertions in obtaining secret intelligence. A communication was constantly kept up with New-York, and it was soon ascertained that the deception was complete. The extent of the imposition on Sir Henry Clinton has always been a subject of surprise, but a stratagem which was adopted by Washington, and which fully succeeded, will serve to explain it. There was an individual in New-Jersey, who at one time held a considerable rank in the militia, and who had been employed by Washington to gain intelligence. In this service he had proved himself shrewd, observing, and alert ; and the information he had given, at the commencement of his career, had been of much importance. Some time prior to this period, General Washington had discovered this man to be a traitor, and that, under cover of serving the American cause, he was in fact in the pay of Sir Henry Clinton. He determined to take advantage of this discovery, and under the pretence of employing him to get farther advices, Washington sent for him to head quarters, where he threw in his way a map, prepared for the purpose, marked with

the pretended route of the army to Shrewsbury, and with plans of the land and naval attack upon New-York. Anxious to confirm his impressions by every possible means, this same individual sought an interview with Colonel Hamilton, and under semblance of a zeal for the American interests, inquired of him the destination of the army. Hamilton, confident that a disclosure by him of the actual intentions of the commander-in-chief, would be the most certain means of deceiving him, as it could not be supposed that he would communicate such an important and confidential secret, at once replied, "we are going to Virginia." The spy, thus completely duped, hastened with his information to the enemy, and communicated it to Sir Henry Clinton, who was in vain prompted by others to suspect the real designs of the Americans, and replied to every importunity, that he had information of a kind, and from a source, that could not be disputed.

The intelligence of De Grasse's approach, had been communicated to General Washington by the Superintendent of Finance, who immediately on the receipt of it, proceeded express to head quarters. The probability of Cornwallis' capture, now became strong. But a great obstacle existed:—it was the utter incapacity of moving the army for want of funds. Robert Morris, on this occasion, rendered one of those great services to his country, which no other individual could have performed;—he assumed the responsibility of moving the army. Washington, aware of the embarrassed finances, inquired where were his means? He replied, that he did not himself know, but that he would find them. He immediately returned to Philadelphia, secured all the water craft on the Delaware, provided supplies on the route of the army, and while Washington was collecting a force to protect West Point, raised a large portion of the necessary funds on his personal responsibility.

Hamilton, in the mean time, had attained his wishes; and

on the sixteenth of August, he writes, — “I wrote you by the last post, in which I informed you that I had taken command of my corps. Major Fish is with me. I prize him both as a friend and an officer.” And a few days after, he thus announces to his wife his departure for the south: — “In my last letter, I informed you that there was a greater prospect of activity now, than there had been heretofore. I did this to prepare your mind for an event which, I am sure, will give you pain. I begged your father, at the same time, to intimate to you by degrees the probability of its taking place. I used this method to prevent a surprise, which might be too severe to you. A part of the army, my dear girl, is going to Virginia, and I must, of necessity, be separated at a much greater distance from my beloved wife. I cannot announce the fatal necessity, without feeling every thing that a fond husband can feel. I am unhappy; — I am unhappy beyond expression. I am unhappy, because I am to be so remote from you; because I am to hear from you less frequently than I am accustomed to do. I am miserable, because I know you will be so; I am wretched at the idea of flying so far from you, without a single hour’s interview, to tell you all my pains and all my love. But I cannot ask permission to visit you. It might be thought improper to leave my corps at such a time, and upon such an occasion. I must go without seeing you, — I must go without embracing you: — alas! I must go. But let no idea, other than of the distance we shall be asunder, disquiet you. Though I said the prospects of activity will be greater, I said it to give your expectations a different turn, and prepare you for something disagreeable. It is ten to one that our views will be disappointed, by Cornwallis retiring to South Carolina by land. At all events, our operations will be over by the latter end of October, and I will fly to my home. Don’t mention I am going to Virginia.”

The allied armies moved on the twenty-second of August,
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and having taken a circuitous route to keep up the deception, reached Philadelphia on the second of September. Generals Washington and Rochambeau then proceeded to an interview with De Grasse ; and General Lincoln, commanding the Americans, and Baron De Viomenil the French, moved on to the head of Elk, which they reached on the sixth of September. From this place, Hamilton again writes, — “Yesterday, my lovely wife, I wrote to you enclosing you a letter in one to your father, to the care of Mr. Morris. To-morrow the post sets out, and to-morrow we embark for York Town. I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of writing you a few lines. Constantly uppermost in my thoughts and affections, I am happy only when my moments are devoted to some office that respects you. I would give the world to be able to tell you all I feel, and all I wish, but consult your own heart, and you will know mine. What a world will soon be between us ! To support the idea, all my fortitude is insufficient. What must be the case with you, who have the most female of female hearts ? I sink at the perspective of your distress, and I look to heaven to be your guardian and supporter. Circumstances which have just come to my knowledge, assure me that our operations will be expeditious, as well as our success certain. Early in November, as I promised you, we shall certainly meet. Cheer yourself with this idea, and with the assurance of never more being separated. Every day confirms me in the intention of renouncing public life, and devoting myself wholly to you. Let others waste their time and their tranquillity in a vain pursuit of power and glory ; — be it my object to be happy in a quiet retreat, with my better angel.” Again he writes from Annapolis, — “How chequered is human life ? — how precarious is happiness ? — how easily do we often part with it for a shadow ? These are the reflections that frequently intrude themselves upon me, with a painful application. I am going to do my duty.

Our operations will be so conducted, as to economize the lives of men. Exert your fortitude, and rely upon heaven."

These repeated expressions of attachment, are but the gentler declarations of the strong feelings which animated his breast, always full of tenderness to every object of his regard. It is apparent from his correspondence at this time, that he entertained a fixed purpose, should the opportunity offer, of establishing his military character on still higher ground, and winning a meed of fame, connected with the last great event in his country's early glory, and that he foresaw, with a deep foreboding of danger, the high enterprise to which his ambition pledged him.

The transports which had been furnished by Barras, in the absence of De Grasse, reached the harbour between James Town and Williamsburg, on the twenty-second of September, with the advance of the Americans, where they disembarked, the residue soon following. The whole body moved forward, and on the twenty-eighth arrived within two miles of the enemy's works at York Town; Hamilton commanding a corps of light infantry, which was attached to the division of La Fayette, who had joined with the remains of the little army of Virginia.

The selection of this position by Lord Cornwallis, under the circumstances in which he was placed, can by no means be regarded as exhibiting a want of military skill. Had the British General pursued his own wishes, he would have returned to the command of the army in South Carolina; but this would have been a violation of his orders from Sir Henry Clinton, who, apprehensive for his own safety, had directed a portion of the forces in Virginia to return to New-York. It had, also, been a favourite object with the British ministry, to establish a permanent and central post, whence their naval enterprises could be more successfully conducted. Portsmouth, at first, attracted the attention of the British General, but was found wholly unsuited to his

purpose. He next had in view the establishment of his army at Point Comfort, but greater objections existed to it, and York Town remained the only choice.

This small village, lying on the south side of the noble stream whence it derives its name, is situated on the beautiful peninsula, formed by the York and the James, in their approach to the Chesapeake.

Gloucester, which is on the north and opposite side of the York, projects so far into the river, that the distance between the headlands little exceeds a mile.

Here Cornwallis, intercepted in his retreat to the interior by La Fayette, who after a series of masterly movements, had completely kept him at bay, — deterred, also, by the violent heats of the season, and cut off by De Grasse from all hopes of succour by sea, had concentrated his army, to the number of seven thousand men.

On the west and northwest, his post was protected by an inlet from the river, a morass, and a deep ravine. On the high banks of the river to the north, batteries were erected, which co-operating with those on the Gloucester side, controlled the river pass, which was narrowed by vessels sunk in the channel, and was also commanded by several ships of war stationed in the offing. The south and southwest, the most accessible points, were covered by an extensive line of field fortifications, which his army were engaged in throwing up, when the Americans landed.

On their approach, a show of opposition was made on their left, but a few pieces being advanced by Viomenil, the enemy receded. On the twenty-ninth of September, the Americans took their ground in front and on the left of their works, and kept up a light and scattering fusilade. The enemy, apprehensive they would get between their outworks and the town, evacuated the greater part of them on the following day, and they were occupied by the American light infantry, supported by their allies. During the

ensuing days, the besiegers were engaged in throwing up redoubts, which was effected with great intrepidity, under a heavy cannonade.

On the sixth of October, the army moved forward, and opened their first parallel, within six hundred yards of the enemy, under cover by day light. Hamilton now moved his corps of light infantry into the works, and planted their standards on the top of the line of the parallel. On the ninth and tenth, six heavy batteries, three French and three American, opened a heavy fire on the British, which dismounted some of their guns, injured their embrasures, and compelled them to shelter their cannon behind the merlons. This was followed by an almost entire suspension of the fire, and the loss of their heaviest vessel, the *Charon*, a forty-four gun frigate, by a hot shot from the French battery, which burnt to the water's edge, presenting, in a serene night, a magnificent and melancholy spectacle.

On the evening of the eleventh, the second parallel was opened by Steuben's division, which was carried on within three hundred and sixty yards of the enemy's batteries, with amazing rapidity during the night; while their shot and shells kept up a continual and dazzling blaze, and was completed on the succeeding day.

It now became necessary to obtain possession of two detached redoubts, which were advanced on the left of the enemy, within three hundred yards in their front, which enfiladed the whole line of the American entrenchments, and were supposed to command the communication between York and Gloucester. The heavy and incessant fire which had been poured in upon them, it was believed, had rendered them practicable, and it was determined to carry them by assault. The work on the extreme left to be forced by the American light infantry, comprising a part of La Fayette's division; that on the right, by a detachment of

French grenadiers and chasseurs, commanded by De Vio-menil.

This was the opportunity for which Hamilton had so long, so eagerly hoped, of signalizing himself by some act of distinguished prowess. But he was on the point of losing it. The fourteenth of October was his tour of duty, but from a supposed precedence due to that part of the light infantry which had made the Virginian campaign, Washington had determined to give the attack to Colonel Barber.

The moment Hamilton learned this arrangement, he left Major Fish, proceeded immediately to the General's quarters and remonstrated with him, claiming the right of the attack, as the officer on duty. His appeal was successful, and Hamilton returned in the highest spirits, exclaiming to Fish, "We have it! we have it!" The disposition was then made to advance in two columns. The right composed of Gimat's battalion, and Hamilton's, under Major Fish. The left, under Laurens, with a small body of picked men, who was directed to take them in reverse.

The redoubt, on the right, was to be attacked by a body of grenadiers, under Count Deux Ponts and Colonel L'Estrade, supported by the regiment of Gatinois: a disposition intended to prevent any jealousy between the armies, and to excite their emulation.

The signal of attack was a shell from the American battery, with a corresponding one from the French.

As soon as the first shell reached its zenith, that from the French battery also ascended. Hamilton then gave the order to advance at the point of the bayonet, pushed forward, and before the rest of the corps had ascended the abatis, mounted over it, stood for a moment on the parapet, with three of his soldiers, encouraging the others to follow, and sprung into the ditch. Fish followed. Gimat, receiving a wound from the first sentinel as they were unmasking, was

compelled to retire. The American infantry, animated by the address and example of their leader, pressed on, with muskets unloaded and fixed bayonets. They soon reached the counterscarp, under a heavy and constant fire from the redoubt, and surmounting the abatis, ditch, and palisades, mounted the parapet; and leaped into the work.

Hamilton, who had pressed forward, followed by the van guard under Mansfield, was, for a short time, lost sight of, and it was feared he had fallen: but he soon re-appeared, formed the troops in the redoubt, and as soon as it surrendered gave the command to Major Fish.

The impetuosity of the attack carried all before it, and within nine minutes from the time the abatis was passed, the work was gained. "Not a gun," says La Fayette, "was fired. The ardour of the troops did not give time for the sappers to derange the abatis; and owing to the conduct of the commander, and bravery of the men, the redoubt was stormed with uncommon rapidity."* "Few cases," says Washington, "have exhibited greater proofs of intrepidity, coolness, and firmness, than were shown on this occasion."

Colonel Barber's battalion, the first in the supporting column, arrived at the moment the advance were getting over the works, and executed their orders with the utmost alacrity, (the Colonel being slightly wounded,) while the rest of the division, under Muhlenburg and Hagen, advanced with admirable firmness, and formed their columns with perfect silence and order, under the fire of the enemy.

The gallantry of the storm was not less distinguished than the humanity of the victors. In the midst of the works, as soon as Hamilton saw the enemy driven back,

* "Colonel Hamilton, whose well-known talents and gallantry were most conspicuous. Our obligations to him, to Colonel Gimat, and Colonel Laurens, and to each and all the officers and men, are beyond expression."

he ordered his men to halt, and excepting in the charge at the onset, not a man was injured. An incident occurred as soon as they entered the redoubt, to which Hamilton refers in his report. "Incapable of imitating examples of barbarity, and forgetting recent provocations, the soldiery spared every man who ceased to fight."

Colonel Scammell, of the light infantry, while reconnoitering, a few days before, was surprised by a party of horse, and after he was taken was wantonly wounded, of which wound he died. When Colonel Campbell, who commanded the redoubt, advanced to surrender, a captain, who had served under Scammell, seized a bayonet, and drew back with the intent of plunging it into his breast, when Hamilton turned it aside, and Campbell, exclaiming, "I place myself under your protection," was made prisoner by Laurens.*

* Doctor Gordon, whose statements are often erroneous, says, in speaking of this affair, "The light infantry of the Americans were commanded by Marquis La Fayette, and the service was allotted to a select corps. The Marquis said to General Washington, 'The troops should retaliate on the British for the cruelties they have practised.' The General answered, 'You have full command, and may order as you please.' The Marquis ordered the party to remember New-London, and to retaliate by putting the men in the redoubt to the sword, after having carried it.— * * * * * Lieutenant Colonel Laurens personally took the commanding officer. The Colonel's humanity and that of the Americans, so overcame their resentments that they spared the British. When bringing them off, as prisoners, they said among themselves, 'Why, how is this? We were ordered to put them to death.' Being asked by others why they had not done it, they answered, 'We could not, when they begged so hard upon their knees for their lives.'" To this shameful fabrication, the attention of Colonel Hamilton was drawn. It is thus refuted:

To the Editor of the Evening Post.

New-York, August 10, 1802.

SIR,

Finding that a story, long since propagated, under circumstances which it was expected would soon consign it to oblivion, (and by which I have been

The redoubt on the right was also taken, but with less celerity, the Americans having the work in their possession, and being regularly formed, while their allies were yet engaged in removing the abatis.

The fate of the enemy was now decided. The second parallel was continued during the night, the two redoubts enveloped, and a line of communication opened with the first before break of day. As a last effort, a sortie was made, towards day-light of the sixteenth, which proved unsuccessful.

Cornwallis, who knew the weakness of his defences, and had placed his only hopes on succour from New-York, resolved to make a desperate attempt to cross to Gloucester, intending to escape by land to New-York. Boats were prepared, and a part of the troops embarked, when a violent storm arose, which drove the boats down the river, and prevented the completion of his bold design. New batteries were now finished by the Americans; the whole works were mounted, and a heavy and irresistible cannonade en-

complimented at the expense of Generals Washington and La Fayette,) has of late been revived, and has acquired a degree of importance by being repeated in different publications, as well in Europe as America, it becomes a duty to counteract its currency and influence by an explicit disavowal.

The story imports in substance, that General La Fayette, with the approbation or connivance of General Washington, ordered me, as the officer who was to command the attack on a British redoubt, in the course of the siege of York Town, to put to death all those of the enemy who should happen to be taken in the redoubt, and that through motives of humanity I forbore to execute the order.

Positively and unequivocally I declare, that no such nor similar order, nor any intimation nor hint resembling it, was ever by me received, or understood to have been given.

It is needless to enter into an explanation of some occurrences on the occasion alluded to, which may be conjectured to have given rise to the calumny. It is enough to say, that they were entirely disconnected with any act of either of the Generals who have been accused.

With esteem I am, sir, your most obedient servant,

A. HAMILTON.

sued. On the morning of the seventeenth, while the light infantry were in the trenches, the chamade was beat, and propositions for surrender made. It is related by Colonel Fish, that when the sealed packet addressed to Washington, which was delivered to La Fayette, came in, the General was riding along the line. He had passed Hamilton, and as soon as he had read the despatch, sent for him, and asked his opinion as to the terms. After a short time, a suspension of hostilities was agreed to, and the enemy capitulated; Laurens, at the surrender, representing the American army, both as an honour due to his distinguished merits, and to remind the British king, that he, whose father was a prisoner in the Tower, held in his hands the fate of the commander of his armies.*

Congratulations now poured in upon Washington, and upon his allies, from every quarter of the country; the public bodies vying with each other, in an emulation of gratitude. A vote of thanks was rapturously passed by congress, a marble column was ordered to be erected at York Town, in commemoration of the event, and special honours were conferred on both commanders.

While receiving the warmest expressions of admiration from the whole army, Hamilton, thus modestly, in a letter written to soothe the anxiety of his wife, adverts to what had passed. "Two nights ago,† my Eliza, my duty and my honour obliged me to take a step in which your happiness was too much risked. I commanded an attack upon one of the enemy's redoubts; we carried it in an instant, and with little loss. You will see the particulars in the Philadelphia papers. There will be, certainly, nothing more of this kind; all the rest will be by approach; and if there should be another occasion, it will not fall to my turn to execute it."

* Cornwallis was, it is believed, at this time Constable of the Tower.

† October 16th.

Washington, anxious to push his advantages, solicited De Grasse to co-operate in the relief of Wilmington and Charleston. The former object was at first assented to; but the French admiral conceiving it his duty to return to the West Indies, changed his views. The plan was abandoned, and after having completed the arrangements for the disposal of the captured army, while the French remained in Virginia, the Americans returned to the north, and were cantoned, in the latter part of November, in New-Jersey and in New-York.

Washington, having concerted measures for the next campaign in a personal interview with congress, revisited Mount Vernon, loaded with laurels, and crowned with glory, while Hamilton returned on furlough to his home.

Gratifying as had been the result of this campaign, which sealed the national independence, and proud as were his reflections in reviewing the long series of services he had rendered his country, and in being connected so conspicuously with an event which may be regarded as the closing scene of the revolution, yet those reflections were not unmingled with others of a deeply painful character. Though, with every uncorrupted mind, he deplored the miseries of war,* yet long service had confirmed in his bosom a fondness for military life. As an eloquent friend has well remarked, "his early education was in the camp; there his earliest and most cordial friendships were formed; there he became enamoured of glory, and was admitted to her

* In a letter to a friend, written after the close of the campaign of 1776, he observes: "Your sentiments respecting war are perfectly just. I don't wonder at your antipathy to it. Every fine feeling of a delicate mind revolts from the idea of shedding human blood, and multiplying the common evils of life by the artificial methods incident to that state. Were it not for the evident necessity, and in defence of all that is valuable in society, I could never be reconciled to a military character, and shall rejoice when the restoration of peace, on the basis of freedom and independence, shall put it in my power to renounce it."

embrace.”* This life was now soon to end, and those friendships, so warmly cherished, could be cultivated only at intervals.

Knowing also that the army was not a favourite of congress, he could not but survey, for the last time, with pain, the war-worn faces of those faithful men, who, while winning the liberties of their country, had won for her such imperishable renown, requited, as he felt they were to be, by the grossest ingratitude.

Of his immediate companions in the family of Washington, with two he had already parted. Early in the year, Meade, who had recently married, retired from the service, and except by his gallantry in rushing to the aid of Steuben, and repulsing the advances of Arnold from his native state, was no longer known as a public man.

The “Old Secretary,” Harrison, as he was familiarly called, left the army the previous spring, having been appointed, by the state of Maryland, Chief Justice of its Supreme Court; which situation he filled until the adoption of the Federal Constitution, when such was Washington’s estimate of the claims of this meritorious individual upon his country, that he nominated him a Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States, immediately after its organization, which he declined.†

* Fisher Ames.

† The following letter, written by Colonel Harrison to Hamilton, as a vindication of his motives for leaving the army, may not be deemed inappropriate, as an act of justice to an early friend.

“New-Windsor, ———, 1781.

“I came here, my dear Hamilton, on Friday night to bid adieu to the General, to you, and to my other friends as a military man, and regretted much that I had not the happiness of seeing you. To-morrow I am obliged to depart, and it is possible our separation may be forever. But be this as it may, it can only be with respect to our persons, for as to affection, mine for you will continue to my latest breath. This event will probably surprise you, but from your knowledge of me, I rely you will conclude at the instant, that no light

Tilghman, McHenry, and Laurens remained in the service.

The first, whose social virtues were only equalled by his military daring, continued with the commander-in-chief until his resignation, from whom he received the warmest acknowledgements of gratitude. He then established himself in Baltimore, where he died in seventeen hundred and eighty-six.

McHenry, whom Hamilton described "as sensible, judicious, well informed, of an intrepidity never questioned, and of a temper, which though firm in the support of principles, was full of moderation and amenity," returned to Maryland, where he exercised a salutary influence in the councils of that state, filled a seat in congress a short time, and closed his public life as Secretary at War.

But the individual who held the first place in Hamilton's

considerations would have taken me from the army; and, I think, I might safely have rested the matter here. However, as the friendship between us, gives you a claim to something more, and as I am not indifferent about character, and shall be anxious to have the esteem of all who are good and virtuously great, I shall detail to you, my friend, the more substantial reasons which have led to my present conduct. I go from the army, then, because I have found, on examination, that my little fortune, earned by an honest and hard industry, was becoming embarrassed; to attend to the education of my children; to provide, if possible, for the payment of a considerable sum of money, with which I stand charged in the partition of my father's estate; to save a house which I had begun, and without instant attention would be ruined; and because the state of Maryland, in a flattering manner, have been pleased to appoint me to a place, very respectable in its nature, corresponding with my former, and interesting to my whole future life and support: — they have appointed me to the chair of the Supreme Court. These, my friend, are the motives to my present resolution. My own feelings are satisfied on the occasion, though I cannot but regret parting with the most valuable acquaintances I have, and I hope they will justify me most fully to you, my Hamilton, especially when you consider the time I have been in the service, and the compensation I have received * * *. Adieu.

"Yours, in haste, most affectionately,

"ROBT. H. HARRISON."

affections was Laurens, with whom he now parted, not again to meet.

This heroic soldier joined the army in the beginning of seventeen hundred and seventy-seven; distinguished himself at Brandywine, and at Germantown only retired after an impetuous, though unadvised attempt upon Chew's house, from which Hamilton endeavoured to dissuade him, after having received a severe wound, and having left two-thirds of his men upon the field.

At Monmouth, where every member of Washington's staff contended not only for their country, but for the honour of their chief, he was conspicuous in leading the soldiers to the charge, and rallying them on the retreat. At Rhode-Island, he commanded a regiment of infantry, and received the especial thanks of Sullivan for his order and gallantry.

He was incessantly employed in various operations while at the south. At the siege of Savannah, he gave a singular instance of his high-wrought feelings. After the defeat, he stood lost in abstraction, with his arms wide extended, in the midst of a heavy fire, and replied to a remonstrance on his rashness, "My honour does not permit me to survive the disgrace of this day;" and was only recalled to his duty, by a peremptory order to cover the retreat. At Charleston, he sallied from the town, and frequently repulsed the besiegers, and was again wounded. Having twice received the thanks of congress, he returned, after the surrender at York Town, to Carolina, where hearing of the approach of a party of the enemy, he arose from his sick bed, threw himself at the head of his corps, and fell in a trifling skirmish near the banks of the Combahee. A short time before his death, he writes to Hamilton, complaining "that the enemy's system was perfectly defensive, and rendered the campaign insipid. Many of our sanguine citizens have flattered themselves with the idea of a prompt evacuation of Charleston. I wish the garrison would either withdraw or

fight us. Adieu, my dear friend. While circumstances place so great a distance between us, I entreat you not to withdraw the *consolation* of your letters. You know the unalterable sentiments of your affectionate Laurens."

Of all the youthful soldiers of the revolution, there is not one upon whose story the recollections of his contemporaries have more fondly dwelt. His distinguished place in the affections of Washington, and the repeated public honours proffered to him by congress, his numerous and varied services, his address in negotiation, his gallantry in battle, his exalted zeal, and his lofty spirit, elevated him so far above his fellow-soldiers, that at his name every youthful aspiration of ambition was kindled.

But Laurens was not alone a gallant soldier, a distinguished patriot, a skilful diplomatist. To these he added all the endearing and social affections, all the attractions of a noble nature, all the graces of a refined and cultivated intellect, and an address which possessed an irresistible, an endless charm.

Qualities which in other men might have offended by their contrast, in him only served to give richness of character, and create variety of interest. His intrepid spirit was coupled with a self-distrust, a confiding weakness of temper, which awakened in his friends surprise and love. While to others his heart was all kindness and benevolence, he was unjust only to himself; and while the world saw him graced with every virtue, he was still aspiring to some higher excellence, — an ideal perfection, which is denied to our nature, and exists only in the warm conceptions of a mind deeply tinged with romance. Nothing can more fully express this inward struggle for superior excellence, than his letter to Hamilton, and the latter's elegant rebuke, that "he refined on the refinements of sensibility."

With a bosom not less alive to the most generous emotions, but with a mind of a firmer texture, Hamilton repro-

ved, in the noble spirit of his friend, an excess of that delicacy which he himself cherished.

In the intercourse of these martial youths, there was a deep fondness of friendship, which approached the tenderness of feminine attachment. On the annunciation of his sad fate, Hamilton writes to La Fayette, — “ Poor Laurens ! he has fallen a sacrifice to his ardour, in a trifling skirmish in South Carolina. You know how truly I loved him, and will judge how much I regret him.”

This simple tribute of affection, conveyed a deeper meaning than is expressed ; for while his country deplored the untimely fate of this their favourite youth, cut off in the career of honour, his friend knew the deep wound he had received at an early period of his life, and that there was that upon his memory which made the latest moment the most desired of his existence.

CHAPTER XV.

[1732.]

AT the close of the year, Hamilton, as has been previously mentioned, returned to Albany.

There, amidst a circle of friends, to whom his social virtues more endeared him than the lustre of his reputation, he, whose lot from infancy had been cast among strangers, enjoyed all the happiness of finding in General Schuyler and his family a second parent, and new relatives.

In this hospitable abode he remained until the ensuing spring, mingling cheerfully with the small society of a place, where a simplicity of manners then prevailed, almost patriarchal; and strengthening the intimacy he had already formed with Schuyler, who saw, with pride, the development of the powers of his mind, and with whom his life was a continued scene of uninterrupted regard, harmony, and confidence.

Although no definitive opinion could be formed in the course of the winter, as to the conclusion of a treaty, and the measures of congress, prompted by the zealous exhortations of General Washington, indicated a determination to prepare for a vigorous prosecution of the war, which the proceedings of the English parliament, at the beginning of its session evinced no disposition to discontinue, yet the advices received by Colonel Hamilton from the Marquis De La Fayette, who was in close conference with the American negotiators, and lending all his influence to promote their views, and from the Viscount De Noailles, of the temper of the continental powers, with the situation of the British army in the northern states, gave little reason to expect an active campaign in that quarter.

The birth of a son imposed on him new obligations; and, influenced by these considerations, he determined to prepare himself for the duties of private life. He selected the profession of the law, — a pursuit which was justly deemed the most honourable in the country, and in which had been formed the largest number of its most conspicuous characters.

On the first intimation of this purpose, his friends, unwilling to lose his services to the public, strongly urged him to defer his purpose. The idea of his being appointed a commissioner to conclude a peace, was suggested to him, and the slow advances of the legal profession, in an impoverished and inactive community were depicted, to deter him from making what was then deemed a sacrifice.

But his ideas of personal independence, induced him to decline the most generous offers of aid from Schuyler, and to the dark professional prospects which were held up, he replied, with a modest, but confident expression of his reliance on the certainties of perseverance.

With these views, he proceeded to Philadelphia, and, although his sole resources were in himself, addressed the following letters to General Washington, strongly illustrative of the pride and disinterestedness of his character.

HAMILTON TO WASHINGTON.

SIR,

I need not observe to your excellency, that respect for the opinion of congress will not permit me to be indifferent to the impressions they may receive of my conduct. On this principle, though I do not think the subject of the enclosed letter of sufficient importance to request an official communication of it, yet I should be happy it might in some way be known to the members of that honourable body. Should they hereafter learn, that though retained on the list of their officers, I am not in the execution of the duties

of my station, I wish them to be sensible, that it is not a diminished zeal which induces me voluntarily to withdraw my services, but that I only refrain from intruding them, when circumstances seem to have made them either not necessary, or not desired ; and that I shall not receive emoluments, without performing the conditions to which they were annexed. I also wish them to be apprized, upon what footing my future continuance in the army is placed, that they may judge how far it is expedient to permit it. I therefore take the liberty to request the favour of your excellency to impart the knowledge of my situation, in such manner as you think most convenient.

I have the honour to be,

With perfect respect,

Your excellency's

Most obedient and humble servant.

HAMILTON TO WASHINGTON.

SIR,

Your excellency will, I am persuaded, readily admit the force of this sentiment, that though it is the duty of a good citizen to devote his services to the public, when it has occasion for them, he cannot, with propriety or delicacy to himself, obtrude them, when it either has, or appears to have, none.

The difficulties I experienced last campaign in obtaining a command, will not suffer me to make any farther application on that head.

As I have many reasons to consider my being employed hereafter in a precarious light, the bare possibility of rendering an equivalent, will not justify to my scruples, the receiving any future emoluments from my commission. I therefore renounce, from this time, all claim to the compensations attached to my military station during the war, or after it. But I have motives which will not permit me to resolve on

a total resignation. I sincerely hope a prosperous train of affairs may continue to make it no inconvenience to decline the services of persons, whose zeal in worse times was found not altogether useless; but as the most promising appearances are often reversed by unforeseen disasters, and as unfortunate events may again make the same zeal of some value, I am unwilling to put it out of my power to renew my exertions in the common cause, in the line in which I have hitherto acted.

I shall, accordingly, retain my rank, while I am permitted to do it; and take this opportunity to declare, that I shall be at all times ready to obey the call of the public, in any capacity, civil or military, (consistent with what I owe to myself,) in which there may be a prospect of my contributing to the final attainment of the object for which I embarked in the service. I have the honour to be,

Very respectfully,

Your excellency's

Most obedient servant,

A. HAMILTON.

Philadelphia, March 1, 1782.

While at Philadelphia, he received a letter relating to the same subject, from his friend Colonel Meade, to which the following is a reply.

HAMILTON TO MEADE.

Philadelphia, March, 1782.

An half hour since brought me the pleasure of your letter of December last. It went to Albany and came from thence to this place. I heartily felicitate you on the birth of your daughter. I can well conceive your happiness upon that occasion, by that which I feel on a similar one.

Indeed, the sensations of a tender father of the child of a

beloved mother, can only be conceived by those who have experienced them.

Your heart, my Meade, is peculiarly formed for enjoyments of this kind. You have every right to be a happy husband, a happy father. You have every prospect of being so. I hope your felicity may never be interrupted.

You cannot imagine how entirely domestic I am growing. I lose all taste for the pursuits of ambition. I sigh for nothing but the company of my wife and my baby. The ties of duty alone, or imagined duty, keep me from renouncing public life altogether. It is, however, probable, I may not be any longer actively engaged in it.

I have explained to you the difficulties which I met with in obtaining a command last campaign. I thought it incompatible with the delicacy due to myself to make any application this campaign. I have expressed this sentiment in a letter to the General, and, retaining my rank only, have relinquished the emoluments of my commission, declaring myself, notwithstanding, ready at all times to obey the calls of the public. I do not expect to hear any of these, unless the state of our affairs should change for the worse, and lest, by any unforeseen accident that should happen, I choose to keep myself in a situation again to contribute my aid. This prevents a total resignation.

You were right in supposing I neglected to prepare what I promised you at Philadelphia. The truth is, I was in such a hurry to get home, that I could think of nothing else. As I set out to-morrow morning for Albany, I cannot, from this place, send you the matter you wish.

Imagine, my dear Meade, what pleasure it *must* give Eliza and myself to know that Mrs. Meade interests herself in us. Without a personal acquaintance, we have been long attached to her. My visit at Mr. Fitzhugh's confirmed my partiality. Betsey is so fond of your family, that she proposes to form a match between her boy and your girl,

provided you will engage to make the latter as amiable as her mother.

Truly, my dear Meade, I often regret that fortune has cast our residence at such a distance from each other. It would be a serious addition to my happiness if we lived where I could see you every day ; but fate has determined it otherwise. I am a little hurried, and can only request, in addition, that you will present me most affectionately to Mrs. Meade, and believe me to be, with the warmest and most unalterable friendship,

Yours,

A. HAMILTON.

Having completed his business at Philadelphia, he returned to Albany ; took a house in the vicinity of General Schuyler, to which he invited, as an inmate, his friend Colonel Troup, who had previously studied the law, and with his aid commenced to prepare himself for the practice of it.

To this dull pursuit, so foreign to all his previous habits, such was his control of the powers of his intellect, that he devoted himself with the most unremitting labour. His retentive memory was tasked to its utmost. His habit was to read while walking to and fro, and so incessant were his labours, that his intimates would smile at the idea, that while prosecuting this study, with the same diligence, he might almost have marched from one end to the other of the confederacy. At the ensuing July term of the supreme court, he obtained a licence to practise.

Such was the knowledge he acquired during this short period of four months, "that he composed a Manual on the Practice of the Law," which, says Troup, "served as an instructive grammar to future students, and became the ground-work of subsequent enlarged practical treatises."*

* There are gentlemen, now living, who copied this manual as their guide.

In the preceding autumn congress had recommended to the several states to levy a separate tax for continental requisitions, and had invested the Superintendent of Finance with the power of appointing an officer in each state to receive these taxes; an idea not improbably suggested by Hamilton's letter of September, 1780, intimating the importance of appointing in each state a "continental superintendent." While engaged in the prosecution of his legal studies, he received the following letter from Robert Morris.

ROBERT MORRIS TO HAMILTON.

Office of Finance, Philadelphia, May 2d, 1782.

"SIR,

"Mr. Charles Stuart, late commissary general of issues, has informed me that you are disposed to quit the military line, for the purpose of entering into civil life. He, at the same time, induced me to believe that you would accept the office of receiver of the continental taxes in the state of New-York. The intention of this letter is to offer you that appointment. The duties of the office will appear, in a great degree, from the publications made by me on this subject. In addition, it will be necessary that you correspond with me frequently, and give accurate accounts of whatever may be passing in your state, which it may be necessary for this office to be acquainted with. For the trouble of executing it, I shall allow a fourth per cent. on the monies you receive. The amount of the quota called for from New-York for the current year is, as you know, three hundred and seventy-three thousand five hundred and ninety-eight dollars.

"I make no professions of my confidence and esteem, because I hope none are necessary; but if they are, my wish

that you would accept the offer I make, is the strongest evidence I can give of them."

Hamilton made the following reply. "I had this day the honour of receiving your letter of the second instant, and am much obliged by the mark of your confidence which it contains, and to Colonel Stuart for his friendly intentions upon the occasion.

"My military situation has indeed become so negative, that I have no motives to continue in it, and if my services could be of importance to the public in any civil line, I should cheerfully obey its command. But the plan which I have marked out for myself is the profession of the law, and I am now engaged in a course of studies for that purpose. Time is so precious to me, that I could not put myself in the way of any interruptions, unless for an object of consequence to the public or to myself. The present is not of this nature. Such are the circumstances of this state, that the benefit arising from the office you propose, would not, during the war, yearly exceed one hundred pounds; for unfortunately, I am persuaded, it will not pay annually into the continental treasury forty thousand pounds; and on a peace establishment this will not be, for some time to come, more than doubled. You will perceive that an engagement of this kind does not correspond with my views, and does not afford a sufficient inducement to relinquish them.

"I am not the less sensible to the obliging motives which dictated the offer, and it will be an additional one to the respect and esteem with which I have the honour to be, very truly, sir,

"Your most obedient and humble servant."

On the fourth of June Mr. Morris wrote to him, acknowledging the receipt of this letter, and stating, "I am much obliged by the friendly sentiments you express for me,

which, be assured, I shall retain a grateful sense of. I see with you, that the office I had the pleasure of offering, will not be equal to what your own abilities will gain in the profession of the law; but I did intend that the whole sum should have been paid, although the whole quota of the taxes had not been collected by the state; consequently, the object is greater than you supposed, and the business might probably be effected without more attention than you could spare from your studies. If so, I should still be happy in your acceptance, and will leave the matter open until I have an opportunity of hearing from you upon the subject."

To which Hamilton gave the following answer:

HAMILTON TO MORRIS.

SIR,

* * * * The explanation which you give of your intention, in your late offer, makes it an object that will compensate fully for the time that it will deduct from my other occupations. In accepting it, I have only one scruple, arising from a doubt whether the service I can render in the present state of things, will be an equivalent for the compensation. The whole system, (if it may be so called,) of taxation in this state, is radically vicious, burthensome to the people, and unproductive to government. As the matter now stands, there seems to be little for a continental receiver to do. The whole business appears to be thrown into the hands of the county treasurers; nor do I find that there is any appropriation made of any part of the taxes collected for continental purposes, or any provision to authorize payment to the officer you appoint. This, however, must be made. There is only one way in which I can imagine a prospect of being materially useful; that is, in seconding your applications to the state. In popular assemblies much may sometimes be brought about by personal discussions, by entering into details, and combat-

ing objections as they rise. If it should, at any time, be thought advisable by you to empower me to act in this capacity, I shall be happy to do every thing that depends upon me to effectuate your views. I flatter myself, to you, sir, I need not profess that I suggest this, not from a desire to augment the importance of office, but to advance the public interest.

It is of primary moment to me, as soon as possible to take my station in the law, and on this consideration I am pressing to qualify myself for admission the next term, which will be the latter end of July. After this, should you think an interview necessary, I will wait upon you in Philadelphia. In the mean time, I shall be happy to receive your instructions, and shall direct my attention more particularly to acquiring whatever information may be useful to my future operations. I have read your publications at different times, but as I have not the papers containing them in my possession, it will be necessary that their contents should be comprised in your instructions. A meeting of the legislature is summoned early in the next month, at which, if I previously receive your orders, it may be possible to put matters in train. I am truly indebted to you, sir, for the disposition you have manifested upon this occasion, and I shall only add an assurance of my endeavours to justify your confidence.

ALEX. HAMILTON.

On the second of July following, Mr. Morris writes, enclosing the warrant of appointment and instructions, to which he adds the following observations:—“It gives me singular pleasure, to find that you have yourself pointed out one of the principal objects of your appointment. You will find that it is specified in the enclosure. I must request you to exert your talents, in forwarding with your legislature the views of congress. Your former situation in the

army, the present situation of that very army, your connexions in the state, your perfect knowledge of men and measures, and the abilities with which heaven has blessed you, will give you a fine opportunity to forward the public service, by convincing the legislature of the necessity of copious supplies, and by convincing all who have claims on the justice of congress, that those claims exist only by that hard necessity which arises from the negligence of the states. When to this you shall superadd the conviction, that what remains of the war being a war of finance, solid arrangements of finance must necessarily terminate favourably, not only to our hopes, but even to our wishes. Then, sir, the governments will be disposed to lay, and the people to bear those burthens which are necessary; and then the utility of your office, and of the officer, will be as manifest to others as at present to me."

On the receipt of this communication, Hamilton wrote the following letter.

HAMILTON TO ROBERT MORRIS.

"I shall to-morrow morning commence a journey to Poughkeepsic, where the legislature are assembled, and I will endeavour, by every step in my power, to second your views, though I am sorry to add, without very sanguine expectations. I think it probable the legislature will do something, but whatever momentary effort they make, till the entire change of their present system, very little will be done. To effect this, mountains of prejudice and particular interest are to be levelled. For my own part, considering the late serious misfortune to our ally, the spirit of reformation, of wisdom, and of unanimity, which seems to have succeeded to that of blunder, perverseness, and dissension in the British government, and the universal reluctance of these states to do what is right, I cannot help view-

ing our situation as critical, and I feel it the duty of every citizen to exert his faculties to the utmost to support the measures, especially those solid arrangements of finance, on which our safety depends.

“It is not in the spirit of compliment, but of sincerity, I assure you, that the opinion I entertain of him who presides in the department, was not one of the smallest motives to my acceptance of the office, nor will that esteem and confidence which makes me now sensibly feel the obliging expressions of your letter, fail to have a great share in influencing my future exertions.”

On his arrival at Poughkeepsie, Hamilton addressed a letter, on the sixteenth July, to Governor Clinton, apprizing him of his appointment, and requesting the legislature to vest in him the necessary authority; stating that it was “a part of his duty, to explain to the legislature, from time to time, the views of the Superintendent of Finance, in pursuance of the orders of congress, that they may be the better enabled to judge of the measures most proper to be adopted for an effectual co-operation, and asking his excellency to impart his request, to have the honour of a conference with a committee of the two houses.”

This body had been convened, in an extra session, *at the express instance* of a committee of congress, and was opened with a forcible message from the Governor, urging the importance of a revisal of the tax laws, and calling upon the legislature to denounce the attempts of the British government to make separate treaties with the states, as a measure inevitably to be attended with ruin and infamy, and pressing the importance of the most strenuous exertions to expel the enemy from their territory, to which an answer, prepared by General Schuyler, who was the leader in the senate, responded in the strongest terms. On the twentieth July, the senate adopted a series of resolutions,

declaring their opinion, "that the present system of these states exposes the cause to a precarious issue; that the radical source of most of the embarrassments is the want of sufficient power in congress to effectuate that ready and perfect co-operation of the different states, on which their immediate safety and future happiness depends; that experience had demonstrated the confederation to be defective in several essential points, particularly in not vesting the federal government, either with a power of providing revenue for itself, or with ascertained and productive funds, secured by a sanction so solemn and general, as would inspire the fullest confidence in them, and make them a substantial basis of credit; and that it is essential to the common welfare, that there should be, as soon as possible, a conference of the whole states on the subject, and that it would be advisable, for this purpose, to propose to congress to recommend, and to each state to adopt, the measure of assembling a general convention of the states, specially authorized to revise and amend the confederation, reserving a right to the respective legislatures to ratify their determinations."

These resolutions, in which the hand of Hamilton so distinctly appears, were adopted unanimously,* and within two days after, a joint committee of both houses was, at his instance, appointed to report, at the next session, a system for establishing such funds, within the state, as were best suited to answer its purposes and those of the United States, and for the more effectual collection of taxes, — at the head of which was General Schuyler, through whose influence Hamilton was, on the same day, elected a Delegate to congress.

It is interesting, in the progress of this work, to remark, that to him who had so long laboured to impress on others

* July 22d, 1782.

the importance of a new organization of the government, and who had so large a share in its formation, adoption, and exposition, is to be attributed, with the aid of Schuyler, the first action of the state of New-York, towards this primary object.* In a letter to Mr. Morris, of this date, Hamilton thus speaks of the result of his exertions :

HAMILTON TO ROBERT MORRIS.

“ Poughkeepsie, July 22, 1782.

“ SIR,

“ Agreeable to my letter to you from Albany, I came to this place, and had an interview with a committee of the legislature, in which I urged the several matters contained in your instructions. I strongly represented the necessity of solid arrangements of finance, and by way of argument, pointed out all the defects of the present system. I found every man convinced that something was wrong, but few that were willing to recognise the mischief when defined, and consent to the proper remedy. The quantum of taxes already imposed is so great, as to make it useless to impose any others to a considerable amount ; a bill has, however, passed both houses, payable in specie, bank notes, or your notes, for eighteen thousand pounds.

“ It is at present appropriated to your order, but I doubt whether some subsequent arrangement will not take place for a different appropriation. The commander-in-chief has applied for a quantity of forage, which the legislature is devising the means of furnishing, and I fear it will finish by diverting the eighteen thousand pounds to that purpose. I have, hitherto, been able to prevent this ; but as it is of indispensable importance to me to leave this place immediately, to prepare for an examination, for which I have pledged myself the ensuing term, which is at hand, it is

* It is believed to be the first proceeding of any state on this subject.

possible, after I have left it, contrary ideas will prevail. Efforts have been made to introduce a species of negotiable certificates, which I have strenuously opposed. It has not yet taken place, but I am not clear how the matter will terminate. Should the bill for the eighteen thousand pounds go out, in its present form, I cannot hope that it will produce in the treasury above half the sum, — such are the vices of our present mode of collection. A bill has also passed the assembly, for collecting arrearages of taxes, payable in specie, bank notes, your notes, old continental emissions at one hundred and twenty-eight for one, and a species of certificates issued by the state, for the purchase of horses. This is now before the senate; the arrearages are very large.

“Both houses have unanimously passed a set of resolutions, to be transmitted to congress and the several states, proposing a convention of the states, to enlarge the powers of congress, and vest them with funds. I think this a very eligible step, though I doubt of the concurrence of the other states; but I am certain without it, they never will be brought to co-operate in any reasonable or effectual plan. Urge reforms or exertions, and the answer constantly is, what avails it for one state to make them, without the consent of the others? It is in vain to expose the futility of this reasoning. It is founded on all those passions which have the strongest influence on the human mind.

“The legislature have also appointed, at my instance, a committee to devise, in its recess, a more effectual system of taxation, and to communicate with me on this subject. A good deal will depend on the success of this attempt. Convinced of the absurdity of multiplying taxes in the present mode, when in effect the payment is voluntary, and the money received exhausted in the collection, I have laboured chiefly to instil the necessity of a change in the

plan, and though not so rapidly as the exigency of public affairs requires, truth seems to be making some progress.

“There is no other appropriation to the use of congress than of the eighteen thousand pounds.

“I shall, as soon as possible, give you a full and just view of the situation and temper of this state. This cannot be till after my intended examination; that over, I shall lay myself out in every way that can promote your views, and the public good. I am informed, you have an appointment to make of a commissioner of accounts for this state. Permit me to suggest the expediency of choosing a citizen of the state, a man who, to the qualifications requisite for the execution of the office, adds an influence in its affairs. I need not particularize the reasons for this suggestion. In my next I will also take the liberty to mention some characters. I omitted mentioning, that the two houses have also passed a bill, authorizing congress to adjust the quotas of the states, on equitable principles, agreeable to your recommendation.”

After the adjournment of the legislature, and his admission to the bar, Hamilton devoted himself assiduously to the duties which the urgent solicitations of Mr. Morris earnestly pressed.

The pictures which are given in his letters of this period are of the most gloomy cast. Double sets of officers, with conflicting powers and duties, clogging their respective operations; taxes, far beyond the ability of the people, to be collected through a medium reduced to the lowest point, and almost consumed in the process of collection; while a general system of connivance and fraud prevailed in many of the subordinate departments, which furnished the strongest inducements to check the inquiries, and prevent the adoption of the suggestions of an officer,

whose office itself was an object of the most jealous repugnance.*

To overcome these difficulties was an herculean task ; but he engaged in it with all his characteristic patience of investigation. Though the evils were too extensive, and laid too deep to be reached by any other means than a total change of system, yet he hoped, by scrutinizing the whole train of abuses, such data might be obtained as would enable the office of finance to apply efficient remedies, and gradually to infuse such opinions as would convince the state of its errors, and induce a radical change of policy.

During the interval of the appointment and meeting of the committee, he was constantly engaged in extensive correspondences throughout the state ; in circulars to the county treasurers, to ascertain the receipts and expenses of collection ; in communications with the army contractors, Messrs. Duer and Sands, to learn the amount of expenditures and the quantity of specie, and to promote the circulation and increase the value of the notes of the financier and of the bank, and in devising means to defer and lighten the demands on the general treasury.

While thus employed in fulfilling the calls of the financier, he used the estimate which he obtained, (the incompleteness of which he laments,) as a basis for digesting a new plan of state taxation, which he proposed to submit to the legislature.

The rule adopted in the confederation, after much angry discussion, for fixing the quota of each state, had proved a source of great delay and controversy. The valuation of land which it prescribed, had been found impracticable, and congress had been compelled to adhere to the original system of requisitions, on the basis of the population, as com-

* From an entry in the diary of Mr. Morris, it appears that as late as the twenty-ninth of August, 1782, a committee of inquiry, appointed by congress, questioned his reasons for appointing continental receivers.

puted in seventeen hundred and seventy-five. Each state took advantage of the inaccuracy of this enumeration, and found a ready excuse for the deficiency of their supplies in the incorrectness of the estimate.

To avoid this difficulty, and at the same time to extend the system of taxation as far as was possible, in order to meet the demands of the public, Hamilton framed an elaborate bill, in which, agreeably to a resolution of congress of the preceding February, and to the report of the financier, he proposed to abolish the method which existed, of taxing by arbitrary quotas and assessments, — a source of the greatest injustice and inequality, — and substituting for it a system of specific taxation on lands, distinguished by their character, as meadow or arable ; on salt by the bushel ; on tobacco by the pound ; on carriages ; plate ; on licenses of various kinds ; on menial servants ; on houses ; and a rate of specific duties on imports.

The bill embraces a very minute and systematic scheme to render the assessment and collection easy and secure ; and with a view to prevent the confusion and neglect which had resulted from the proceeds of the taxes being thrown into a general mass, he suggested the appropriation of them to various objects ; that upon land, to the support of the internal government ; on carriages, to the judicial establishment ; the house tax to congress, for supplementary funds ; the salt, license, and tobacco tax, for constituting a loan office, which seems to have been connected with the incorporation of a bank, of which a portion of the income was to be secured to that office.* The surplus of these taxes, and all others, to form an aggregate fund for contingencies, to sup-

* A plan for a state bank and state loan office, is found among the papers, which contemplated one state bank to control the currency ; — the general banking to be conducted by private bankers. It is not in Hamilton's handwriting, and some features of the plan render it probable that it was a project submitted for his consideration, but which he could not have approved.

ply the Federal treasury. A plan of a lottery was also at this time devised by him, containing many ingenious suggestions, and evincing singular care to prevent frauds, from which a considerable sum was hoped to be derived in aid of the finances ; — a mode of taxation which had been proposed by a committee of congress in seventeen hundred and eighty ; but which the enlightened sentiment of the present age has ceased to approve.

Having obtained a license as an attorney in July, he, notwithstanding his public duties, continued to prosecute his legal studies, in order to prepare for admission to the bar as a counsellor, at the ensuing October term of the Supreme Court. A letter to his friend Meade, shows his views on this subject, and gives a pleasing exhibition of his domestic feelings.

HAMILTON TO MEADE.

Albany, August 27th, 1782.

I thank you, my dear Meade, for your letter of the first of this month, which you will perceive has travelled much faster than has been usual with our letters. Our correspondence hitherto has been unfortunate, nor in fact can either of us compliment himself on his punctuality ; but you were right in concluding, that however indolence or accident may interrupt our intercourse, nothing will interrupt our friendship. Mine for you is built on the solid basis of a full conviction that you deserve it, and that it is reciprocal, and it is the more firmly fixed, because you have few competitors. Experience is a continued comment on the worthlessness of the human race, and the few exceptions we find, have the greater right to be valued in proportion as they are rare. I know few men estimable, — fewer amiable, and when I meet with one of the last description, it is not in my power to withhold my affection.

You reproach me with not having said enough about our

little stranger. When I wrote last, I was not sufficiently acquainted with him to give you his character. I may now assure you, that your daughter, when she sees him, will not consult you about the choice, or will only do it in respect to the rules of decorum. He is truly a very fine young gentleman, the most agreeable in his conversation and manners of any I ever knew, nor less remarkable for his intelligence and sweetness of temper. You are not to imagine, by my beginning with his mental qualifications, that he is defective in personal. It is agreed, on all hands, that he is handsome; his features are good, his eye is not only sprightly and expressive, but it is full of benignity. His attitude, in sitting is, by connoisseurs, esteemed graceful, and he has a method of waving his hand that announces the future orator. He stands, however, rather awkwardly, and as his legs have not all the delicate slimness of his father's, it is feared he may never excel as much in dancing, which is probably the only accomplishment in which he will not be a model. If he has any fault in manners, he laughs too much. He has now passed his seventh month.

I am glad to find your prospect of being settled approaches. I am sure you will realize all the happiness you promise yourself with your amiable partner. I wish fortune had not cast our lots at such a distance. Mrs. Meade, you, Betsey, and myself, would make a most affectionate and most happy *partie quarré*.

As to myself, I shall sit down in New-York, when it opens, and the period we are told approaches. No man looks forward to a peace with more pleasure than I do, though no man would sacrifice less to it than myself, if I were not convinced the people sigh for peace. I have been studying the law for some months, and have lately been licensed as an attorney. I wish to prepare myself by October for examination as a counsellor, but some public avocations may possibly prevent me.

I had almost forgotten to tell you, that I have been pretty unanimously elected by the legislature of this state, a member of congress, to begin to serve in November. I do not hope to reform the state, although I shall endeavour to do all the good I can.

Suffer Betsey and me to present our love to Mrs. Meade. She has a sisterly affection for you. My respects, if you please, to Mr. and Mrs. Fitzhugh. God bless you.

A. HAMILTON.

The committee of the legislature, of which he speaks in his letter to Mr. Morris, met on the fifteenth of September, and notwithstanding his labour in devising a system of taxation, such were his doubts of the tone of the public, that in a letter written to Mr. Morris on the evening prior to their meeting, he says, "I am at a loss to know whether I ought to press the establishment of permanent funds or not, though unless I receive your instructions, following my own apprehensions of what are probably your views, I shall dwell upon this article."

On the fifth of October, he writes as follows: "In my last I informed you that the committee appointed by the legislature on the subject of taxation were together.

"In spite of my efforts, they have parted without doing any thing decisive. They have, indeed, agreed on several matters, and those of importance, but they have not reduced them to the form of a report, which, in fact, leaves every thing afloat, to be governed by the impressions of the moment, when the legislature meet.

"The points agreed upon are these: that there shall be an actual valuation of land, and a tax of so much on the pound. The great diversity in the quality of land, would not suffer them to listen to an estimated valuation, or to a tax by the quantity, agreeable to the idea in your late re-

port to congress, that there shall be also a tariff of all personal property, to be also taxed at so much on the pound.

“That there shall be a specific tax on carriages, clocks, watches, and other similar articles of luxury : That money at usury shall be taxed at a fixed rate in the pound, excluding that which is loaned to the public : That houses in all towns shall be taxed at a certain proportion of the annual rent : That there shall be a poll tax on all single men from fifteen upwards ; and that the collection of the taxes should be advertised to the lowest bidder, at a fixed rate per cent., barring all subordinate expenses.

“Among other things which were rejected, I pressed hard for an excise on distilled liquors, but all that could be carried in this article was a license on taverns.

“The committee were pretty generally of opinion, that the system of funding, for payment of old debts, and for procuring farther credit was wise and indispensable ; but a majority thought it would be unwise in one state to contribute in this way alone.

“Nothing was decided on the question of taxes, which the state was able to pay ; those who went farthest did not exceed seventy thousand pounds, of which fifty were for the use of the United States.”

An interesting correspondence continued between Morris and Hamilton, in which the various measures for propping up the credit of the financier, and introducing his notes into extensive circulation, as a common currency, are discussed. In one of these, Hamilton speaks of an address of the public creditors in Albany to those of the whole United States, as having originated with himself, and containing ideas which ought to prevail.

The suspension of interest on the loan office certificates issued at an early stage of the revolution, had produced great distress and discontent among the holders, the greater number of whom resided in Philadelphia. After frequent

consultation, a numerous meeting was convened in that city, and strong resolutions adopted, urging upon congress the necessity of granting them immediate relief. On the appearance of this document, Hamilton conceived the idea that a powerful influence might be exercised upon the measures of congress by the co-operation of the creditors in other states, and with this view a meeting was held at Albany, where General Schuyler presided, at which was proposed a convention of county delegates at Poughkeepsie, and a state delegation to a general convention at Philadelphia, from which he hoped incipient steps might be taken for the adoption of his favourite measure, — a re-organization of the general government. These resolutions were accompanied by the following address, urging the establishment of permanent funds.

“TO THE PUBLIC CREDITORS OF THE STATE OF
NEW-YORK.”

The appellation by which we have chosen to address you, indicates at once the broad and equitable basis upon which we wish to unite the influence and efforts of those who are creditors of the public, to obtain that justice, which the necessities of many, and the rights of all demand. Whatever distinctions may characterize the different classes of creditors, either of the United States, or of this state, — whatever may be their different degrees of merit as patriots, or their comparative claims upon the gratitude or generosity of their country, in one circumstance they all agree, — they have an equal claim upon the justice and plighted faith of the public.

Alarmed by the successive violations of public engagements, and by that recent and distressing one, the withholding the interest hitherto paid by bills on France, upon the monies loaned previous to first March, 1778, the public creditors in this city have thought it necessary to follow

the example of those of the city of Philadelphia, and to convene and consult upon the measures proper to be taken for their own security. They will not dwell upon the measure alluded to, farther than to observe, that its weight is most oppressively felt by those whose zeal in the cause and confidence in their country have been most conspicuous; who in times of danger, have demonstrated their concern for the common safety, by voluntary deposits, in some instances of the whole, in others of a large part of their fortunes in the public funds; and who now, many of them at least, feel themselves reduced from affluence to indigence, — from circumstances of ease and plenty, to penury and unaffected distress.

They cannot but add, that there are others, not less meritorious, who have perhaps experienced even a worse fate; those who, having made subsequent loans, have long since seen the payment of interest cease, and those who, when the distresses of the army have had no resource but in the patriotism of individuals, have cheerfully parted with the fruits of their industry, scarcely reserving a sufficiency for the subsistence of their own families, without any compensation since, besides the consciousness of having been the benefactors of their country.

We entertain not so injurious an idea as to imagine, that levity or contempt of the obligations of national faith, or of the dictates of policy, have influenced those infringements of the public engagements, which have too often happened. We have been sensible of the necessity which has, in some cases, produced them; but we apprehend it to have resulted, not from the want of ability or means, but from the want of a proper system for the beneficial application of them. And we conceive it our duty to acquiesce in that necessity, only so far as there appears to be an unavoidable sacrifice to the urgent calls of particular conjunctions, followed by effectual endeavours to prevent

a continuance or return of the same necessity, or to make satisfaction in some other way.

Few states have been without their vicissitudes, in which the strict obligations of good faith have been obliged to bend to momentary necessities; but the example of all wise and happy ones, combine with reason and justice to establish this truth, that no time ought to be lost in providing the means of repairing those breaches, and making compensation for the sufferers.

Unfortunately for us, and for every citizen of the United States, (for the calamity directly or in its consequences is general,) the same policy has been too long delayed in this country; the only expedient in our power for effecting the object, being still unattempted. We need no arguments to convince us, that it is not possible for these states, by any exertions they can make, to pay off at once the principal of the public debts, and furnish the supplies for the current demands of the war, and for the support of civil government. We even think it as manifest as experience and calculation can make it, that our abilities fall greatly short even of the two latter objects. This, in an infant country, will not surprise those who know that nations the most opulent, and in all the vigour of maturity, are compelled to have recourse to large loans in time of war, to satisfy the public exigencies.

The quota of the present year has been fixed at eight millions of dollars, which we are to consider as the sum requisite for the annual expenditure; and those accustomed to computations of such a nature, will be convinced that to make this sum suffice, requires economy and good management. Have we a prospect of raising one third of this sum within the states? Those who have attended to the publications of the receipts on the continental account, will easily answer the question for themselves. If this

must be in the negative, the inquiry then becomes, what means have we to supply the deficiency?

Admit that there are defects in the system of taxation in almost every state, and that more judgement and equality in the manner of laying them, more energy and economy in the collection, would be more productive to the revenue, and less burthensome to the people, still we cannot imagine that the reformation of these defects would augment the product of the taxes in any proportion to the deficiency.

It is plain, therefore, that the principal part of the balance must be procured upon credit; nor is it less plain, that this must chiefly be from *individuals* at home and abroad. We are assured, that the situation of our allies will not permit them to make us governmental loans, in any proportion to our wants, and without this assurance, we might have inferred it, from a consideration of the immense land and naval establishments which they are obliged to support in the prosecution of the war, on their own part.

It may be asked, if such are the necessities of the public, how are they to spare any part of their funds for the payment of old debts? The answer is easy, — those necessities can only be supplied by a sound and healthy state of public credit, and there is only one way to effect the restoration of this credit, — the putting the old debts in a course of redemption, or at least securing the punctual payment of the interest, by substantial funds, permanently pledged for that purpose.

It cannot be expected, that individuals in this country will hereafter lend to the public, unless they perceive a disposition to do justice to its creditors. If, without providing for those who have already risked their fortunes, securities should be held out to invite future creditors, a suspicion of their faithful application would deter every prudent man.

There must be a good opinion of public faith, before there can be a confidence in public securities; and this opinion can only be created by unequivocal demonstrations of a disposition to do justice; nor will any thing amount to a proof of this, short of the measure on which we insist. In common life, no credit would be given to any man who departed from these principles, and the same rule is not less applicable to nations.

If individuals among ourselves would not have the necessary confidence, it were chimerical to expect it from foreigners. Such of them as, having been already adventurers in our funds, are holders of public certificates, would have little encouragement to adventure farther.

No presumptions of the speedy termination of the war, will invalidate the force of these reflections. Not only the grounds of them are vague and uncertain, and it would be the extremity of folly to abandon an indispensable resource for continuing the war, because there was a possibility of its being ended. But the fullest assurance of the event, would not take away this irresistible argument, that public justice, and its inseparable companion, public credit, are alike essential to the prosperity of a nation in peace and war.

We scruple not to assert, that these states might, with ease to themselves, provide the means requisite to fund the debts already incurred, and to procure farther loans. A moderate sum would be sufficient. It is an expedient which we conceive besides calculated to lighten the burthens of the people, and to increase their ability to bear them. The more we can procure on credit, the less we need exhaust ourselves in immediate taxation; and the public creditors themselves will be enabled to bear a large share of the future burthen, which will, of course, diminish the contributions of others. We might expatiate on the influence of public credit over private industry, and on its

tendency in that way to multiply the riches of the community, and we might add, that the wheels of circulation and commerce, now clogged by the want of an adequate medium, would derive new motion and vivacity from the increase of that medium, by rendering the public securities a valuable negotiable property. We have indulged in these reflections to show that patriotism, not less than necessity, interest, and safety, prompt us to an emphatical appeal to the justice and honour of our country.

What will be the condition of individuals, if a disregard to the sanctity of public obligations should become the spirit of the public councils? We indeed should be the immediate victims, but who can answer when his turn might come? It is true, those who are not already embarked, may avoid hereafter becoming volunteers in their own ruin, but can they guard against the pressing calls of necessity, enforced by legislative coercions? Should we see a renewal of the distresses of the army, for want of subsistence, must not the inhabitants of this state again feel the weight of compulsory laws, and unless justice be done to the present creditors, what hope can they have of recompense? What, in short, will be the security of private property, if the powers of government may be employed to take it from us, and no provision hereafter made to render satisfaction?

A purity of faith has ever been the more peculiar attribute of republics, the very being of which depends on virtue in all, and a sacred regard to justice in those to whom the administration of affairs is entrusted. A contrary disposition in these states, would be as novel as pernicious; and we flatter ourselves, we never shall suffer such a stigma to be fixed upon our national character, especially on our first emerging into political existence.

The propriety of introducing at large such a document, may, perhaps, be questioned; but, when it is remembered,

that the fate of the American union depended on the fulfilment of its engagements ; with what difficulty its discordant members were induced to co-operate ; and when we view Hamilton as the great instrument in producing this result ; the knowledge of every circumstance which can throw light on the state of public opinion ; of every obstacle which was encountered ; and of every effort which was made ; becomes essential in enabling us to judge of the nature and extent of his services.

There is another view, which has a deep and touching interest. Amidst the glare of war, the civil sufferers of the revolution have been little regarded ; and the individuals who nerved the arm of the country with their wealth ; who parted with the fruits of their industry ; who were reduced from affluence to indigence ; who had none of the quickening incentives of ambition to sustain them ; whose intelligence disclosed to them all the hazards they incurred ; and who leaned solely on an elevated and self-denying patriotism, were often remembered only to be stigmatized. They are brought before us here in person with all their unrequited wrongs ; standing before the altar of public faith ; claiming the fulfilment of its pledges for the sacrifices they had made ; in the midst of them is seen Hamilton, pleading in their behalf for that justice which, though long delayed, it was reserved to his hand to administer.

Most of the letters which passed, at this time, between the subject of this memoir and the Superintendent of Finance are lost, and it is the more to be regretted, as, from the manner in which they are referred to, they appear to have contained full views of the many difficult questions which arose, connected with the restoration of public credit.

From those which remain, we may infer, how early ripened were Hamilton's financial opinions, and may form a partial judgement of the extraordinary difficulties, labours, and capacity of Robert Morris, whose luminous views of

the interests of the country, are only less remarkable than the energy, firmness, and resource, with which he seemed to have borne on his shoulders its tottering fortunes.

As the session of congress approached, Colonel Hamilton urged the necessity of a successor being appointed; and on the last day of October relinquished his office of continental receiver, to commence the new and more important career which was opening before him.

END OF VOL. I.

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